NATION

Dumbbells hung from pvt parts: 5 arrested for ragging in Kerala

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BUSINESS

Markets fall for 6th day dragged by FII outflows

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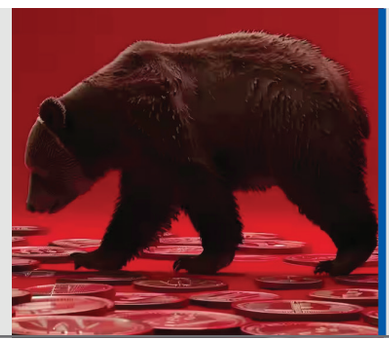

SPORTS

India demolish England, sweep 3-0

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Retail inflation rate declines to 5-month low in January

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Continuing the downward trend, retail inflation fell to a five-month low of 4.31 per cent in January, mainly due to a decline in the prices of vegetables, eggs, and pulses.

The Consumer Price Index-based retail inflation was 5.22 per cent in December and 5.1 per cent in January 2024. The previous low inflation was in August 2024 at 3.65 per cent. The Consumer Price Index has been on a decline since October.

The inflation in the food basket was 6.02 per cent in January, the lowest after August 2024 when it was 5.66 per cent.

There is a decline of 91 basis points in headline inflation of January 2025 in comparison to December 2024 and it is the lowest year-on-year inflation after August 2024, the National Statistics Office (NSO) data showed.

According to the data, the top five items showing the highest year on year inflation were coconut oil (54.2 per cent), potato (49.61 per cent), coconut (38.71 per cent), garlic (30.65 per cent), peas (30.17 per cent).

On the other hand, the key items having the lowest year on year inflation in January were jeera (-32.25 per cent), ginger (-30.92 per cent), dry chilies (-11.27 per cent), brinjal (-9.94 per cent), LPG (excluding conveyance) (-9.29 per cent).

- The inflation in the food basket was 6.02 per cent in January, the lowest after August 2024 when it was 5.66 per cent

Last week, the Reserve Bank years effected a rate cut of 25 basis points after a gap of five years to spur growth as inflation was in its comfort zone. The central bank has been mandated by the government to ensure CPI remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

NSO further said a significant decline in headline and food inflation in the rural sector was observed in January 2025. It was 4.64 per cent in January compared to 5.76 per cent in the preceding month.

The food inflation in the rural sector was 6.31 per cent in comparison to 8.65 per cent in December 2024. *—PTI*

Air India flight gets bomb threat in KIA, FIR filed

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

An Air India flight at Karnataka's Kempegowda International Airport received a bomb threat through an e-mail, as per official sources. "An Air India flight at the Kempegowda International Airport had received a bomb threat two days ago," said Sajith VJ, DCP, North-East Bengaluru. An FIR was filed immediately after the threat was received, sources said. Further investigations are underway. Meanwhile, the Mumbai Police apprehended a man from the Chembur area of Mumbai after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's aircraft received a terror call on 11 February ahead of his official visit abroad, Mumbai Police said on Wednesday. "The person who made the threat call to the Mumbai Police Control Room has been taken into custody from the Chembur area. He is mentally ill," the police added. *—ANI*

US prioritising ties with India, says ex-WH official

NEW YORK, 12 FEB

The Trump administration in the US is prioritising relations with India, recognises the country's potential to transform the Indo-Pacific region and considers it an "important partner" when it comes to competing effectively with China, former White House official Lisa Curtis said. Curtis served President Trump's first administration as the senior director for South and Central Asia in the National Security Council. Her remarks come ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the White House for a bilateral meeting with President Trump on Thursday. In an online press briefing hosted by Washington DC-based think tank The Centre for a New American Security on the eve of Modi's visit, Curtis said, "Clearly, the Trump administration is prioritising relations with India." *—PTI*

Ex-Cong MP faces 2nd conviction in 1984 Sikh riots

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

With a Delhi Court finding former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar guilty, it is his second conviction with respect to 1984 anti-Sikh riots and he faces two more cases. Kumar's conviction came in a case over the murders of two people, Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh during the violence in Delhi's Saraswati Vihar on 1 November, 1984. The judge would hear on 18 February the arguments on the quantum of punishment. The case attracts a maximum punishment of death penalty and life-term imprisonment as the minimum sentence. *—PTI*

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FIGHTER IN THE SKY

The SU-57 fighter jet takes off on the third day of Aero India 2025 at Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru on Wednesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

India, France to jointly build nuclear reactors

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

India and France on Wednesday expressed intent to jointly develop modern nuclear reactors, emphasising that nuclear power was crucial for energy security and transition to a low-carbon economy.

The two countries signed a letter of intent on small modular reactors and advanced modular reactors, according to a joint statement issued after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris.

"Prime Minister Modi and President Macron stressed that nuclear energy is an essential part of the energy mix for strengthening energy security and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy," the statement said.

SMRs are compact nuclear fission reactors that can be manufactured in factories and then installed elsewhere. They typically have a smaller capacity than conventional nuclear reactors. The two leaders also acknowledged the strong civil nuclear ties between India and France and efforts in cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, notably in relation to the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project. An India-France statement released confirms progress has been made towards a deal to manufacture three more French-designed Scorpene-class 'hunter-killer' submarines in Mumbai. India already operates six submarines of this type; the most recent of which, INS Vagsheer, was one of three advanced attack vessels commissioned by Modi last month. News of progress in the deal to buy three more Scorpene subs - at a reported cost of Rs 36,000 crore but with nearly 60 per cent 'Made-in-India' tech, which is higher than that incorporated in the first six - came after talks between Modi and Macron. *—Agencies*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Mazargues War Cemetery, in Marseille, France *PHOTO: PTI*

PM, Macron open new Indian mission in France

PARIS, 12 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday inaugurated India's new consulate in France's Marseille city with the press of a button, amid cheers from the gathered crowd. Modi is in France on the invitation of President Macron. Modi and Macron also visited the Mazargues Cemetery and paid tribute to Indian soldiers who made sacrifices fighting in the Great War. Later, the two leaders also interacted with a section of the people in the crowd. *——PTI*

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SC hits out at election freebies

'Discourages people to work'

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Supreme Court on Wednesday deprecated the practice of political parties promising "freebies" just ahead of elections and asked "are we not creating a class of parasites" instead of bringing people into the mainstream and contributing towards national development.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih also observed that people were not willing to work as they were getting free ration and money.

Justice Gavai then went on to add, "Unfortunately, because of these freebies, which just on the anvil of elections are declared, like 'Ladki Bahin' and other schemes, people are not willing to work."

Hearing a matter concerning the right to shelter of homeless persons in urban areas, the bench said people got free rations and money without working.

"We quite appreciate your concern for them but would it not be better to make them a part of the mainstream of society and permit them to contribute to the development of the nation?" the bench said.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, said there was hardly anybody in the country who did not want to work, if they had work.

To this, Justice Gavai said, "You must be having only one sided knowledge. I come from an agricultural family. Because of the freebies in Maharashtra which they just announced prior to elections, agriculturists are not getting labourers."

The court, however, said it did not want to enter into a debate on this matter. It said everybody, including Attorney General R Venkataramani, was on the same page that providing shelter to the homeless merited due attention. "But at the same time, should it not be balanced?" the bench asked. *—PTI*

GUV OKAYS MICROFINANCE ORDINANCE

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Karnataka Governor Thawarchand Gehlot has given his assent to the ordinance to check harassment by microfinance companies to its borrowers, said government sources on Wednesday.

Following reports about many people dying by suicide, fleeing homes and being tortured by loan recovery agents of the microfinance companies operating in the state, the government had brought the Karnataka Micro Finance (Prevention of Coercive Actions) Ordinance 2025, which had penal provisions of jail term up to 10 years and fine up to Rs 5 lakh.

The Governor on 8 February had returned the ordinance, saying that in its current form, the lenders, who are also part of the society, are being done a great injustice.

Gehlot had also given reasons and suggestions while returning the ordinance. Addressing his concerns, the Karnataka government again sent the ordinance on 10 February.

On Wednesday, the Governor gave his assent to the ordinance. It is learnt that he has asked the government to table the bill in the next legislative session. *—PTI*

Karnataka aims to realise 70% of ₹5L cr investment proposal: MB Patil

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil on Wednesday said the State received investment proposals worth Rs five lakh crore after the inaugural session of the Invest Karnataka-2025 summit on 11 February and the government aims to ensure that at least 70 per cent of the business proposals are realised.

"We have received investment proposals of Rs five lakh crore and we are expecting more than Rs 10 lakh crore worth of investment proposals," Patil told reporters here.

Invest Karnataka-2025 summit will conclude on 14 February.

"We are looking for genuine investments. We want at least 70 per cent of these investment proposals to materialise," the minister added.

DyCM DK Shivakumar and Minister MB Patil during the Global Investors' Meet in Bengaluru on Wednesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

He promised all the investors coming to Karnataka that the state would help their businesses grow.

"We are giving emphasis to all the sectors. We have made a beginning. We will enhance it further," Patil said.

The minister said the exhibition on innovation at the Invest Karnataka venue in Palace Grounds was very impressive. Speaking about an air taxi that caught everyone's attention, the minister said, "The Air Taxi Shunya will revolutionise the urban transport scenario. It can have a capacity to carry six passengers. It can also serve as air ambulance as well." *—PTI*

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$180B ECONOMIC LOSS

India 6th most affected by extreme weather from 1993-2022: Report

PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

India ranked as the sixth-most severely-affected country by extreme weather events in the 1993-2022 period, recording 80,000 fatalities and economic losses of around USD 180 billion, according to a new report.

Globally, the report by Germany-based NGO Germanwatch said more than 9,400 extreme weather events led to over 7,65,000 (7.65 lakh) deaths and direct losses of nearly USD 4.2 trillion (inflation-adjusted).

- India experienced more than 400 extreme weather events in the three decades, causing losses of nearly "USD 180 billion and at least 80,000 fatalities", the report said

India experienced more than 400 extreme weather events in the three decades, causing losses of nearly "USD 180 billion and at least 80,000 fatalities", the report said.

The countries most affected by extreme weather during this period were Dominica, China, and Honduras, followed by Myanmar, Italy, India, Greece, Spain, Vanuatu, and the Philippines.

Laura Schaefer, the report's co-author, said countries in the Global South were disproportionately affected by extreme weather.

"If the data from these countries were as comprehensive as the data from many Global North countries, an even greater degree of economic and human effects might become visible," she said. *—PTI*

Cong changing PCC chiefs in phases, says Kharge

But there is no time limit for changing KPCC Chief

KALABURAGI, 12 FEB

AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge said on Wednesday that the presidents of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) across states will be changed in phases.

"We are changing the KPCC (Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee) president. Similar changes will be made in other states as well in phases," he said in Kalaburagi.

Kharge said the PCC presidents of three states, including Odisha, were changed on Tuesday. He, however, said he cannot specify an exact timeline for these changes. Along with state Congress presidents, office bearers will also be replaced, he said.

Kharge also played down PWD Minister Satish Jarakiholi's meeting with him. "Because I am the AICC president, many people meet me. Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, minister Parameshwara..., and even Chief Minister Siddaramaiah call me. This is all usual," he said.

The KPCC chief said nobody should try to destabilise the government and urged the media not to create unnecesary controversies.

Mallikarjun Kharge and D K Shivakumar **PHOTO: ANI**

Kharge also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US. "Initially, there was no invitation for Modi from the US. It came only after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and others visited that country. If Modi and Trump were really close friends, Modi could have conveyed India's concerns over the phone."

Kharge also dismissed hopes of any positive outcome from Modi's US visit, pointing out that Trump has increased import tariffs. "Right from the start, Modi's 'friend' is intimidating him. So how can we expect anything beneficial for our country from Trump?" he asked. *—Salar News*

DKS mum on Rajanna meeting party High Command

MYSURU, 12 FEB

KPCC President and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday refused to comment on senior leader KN Rajanna meeting the Congress High Command at New Delhi to discuss developments in the state unit. Rajanna is a senior leader of the party, and there is nothing to say about his meeting with the High Command, Shivakumar said. The KPCC chief said he took a holy dip in Triveni Sangama in T Narasipura during his visit to Kumbha Mela. "I did not see any difference between the events organised at T Narasipura and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. Both are holy places," he said. *—Salar News*

IAF CHIEF FLAGS DELAY

HAL cites issues, assures delivery of Tejas to IAF

The US-made F-35 fighter jet made a stunning appearance on the third day of Aero India 2025 at Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru on Wednesday as spectators gathered in large numbers to witness the show **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Maker of Light Combat Aircraft 'Tejas,' Hindustan Aeronautics Limited on Tuesday assured it will soon start delivering the airplane to the Indian Air Force with the technical difficulties now being resolved, amid reports of concerns raised by IAF Chief AP Singh in this connection.

HAL Chairman and Managing Director DK Sunil said, "the delay is not simply attributable to just I would say laziness on part of the industry."

"There have been technical issues which have got sorted out. The concern of the Air Chief is understandable," he told reporters here at the Aero India 2025 event.

According to him, meetings have been held at different levels and HAL, a central PSU would soon be delivering the aircraft.

Sunil's response came amid reports of Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal AP Singh expressing some concerns over the alleged delay in delivery of Tejas to the IAF in a purported video.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said India is going through a revolutionary phase of transformation, and the country's military equipment are not only protecting the borders but are becoming the centre of attraction for the entire world.

He was speaking at indigenisation event and the valedictory ceremony of Aero India 2025 here.|"We all know that India has historically been dependent on imports for its defence needs. If I look back about a decade ago, 65 to 70 per cent of defence equipment was being imported into our country. If we look at the situation today, you may call it resolution or a miracle, but almost the same percentage of defence equipment is being manufactured in the country today," he added.

Additionally, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi said Indian Navy is steadfastly committed to supporting the domestic industry and creating a conducive ecosystem for capability development. He was speaking at the seminar on Transition to Atmanirbhar Indian Naval Aviation 2047. *—PTI*

Safran, BEL sign MoU for weapon manufacturing

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Bharat Electronics Limited and Safran Electronics & Defense, France have signed a MoU to create a joint venture for manufacturing, customising, sales and maintenance of HAMMER, a precision guided air-to-ground weapon, in India. The collaboration will facilitate technology transfer and create opportunities for Indian industries, especially SMEs and position India as a global hub for smart ammunitions production. As part of this partnership, BEL and Safran Electronics & Defense also plan to establish a Center of Excellence aimed at enhancing India's Defence capabilities. This strategic collaboration will facilitate the creation of a state-of-the-art production facility in India, reducing dependency on imports. *—PTI*

Notorious contract killer Bagappa Harijan murdered

VIJAYAPURA, 12 FEB

Bagappa Harijan, a notorious history sheeter, was killed in a attack by a group of unidentified assailants in the Madina Nagar area of Vijayapura on Wednesday. The assailants targeted Bagappa with iron-made weapons, first assaulting him with a 'kundali' (garden tool) before firing two rounds of bullets at him. The incident occurred around 8.50pm while Bagappa was leaving his house. Bagappa Harijan had a long criminal history and was previously attacked in 2023, when a person fired five rounds of bullets at him in the Vijayapura court premises. Bagappa was known to be a key member of the notorious contract killer gang, "Bhima Tirada Hantakaru" (murderers from the banks of river Bhima), which caused terror in Vijayapura and Bagalkot during the early 2000s. The gang, led by the infamous Chandappa Harijan, was responsible for dozens of murders carried out for money. Bagappa was a relative of Chandappa, who was murdered by a rival gang in 2000. In retaliation, Bagappa later killed his own brother, Basappa Harijan, over a property dispute, a case that was filed at the Alamela police station. At the time of his death, Bagappa was facing charges in connection with 10 murder cases. *—Salar News with Agencies*

KWIN City to focus on healthcare: Minister

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Karnataka Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil said that the emerging KWIN City is set to meet world-class standards, with a special focus on the medical and healthcare sectors. The implementation of such projects will not only enhance healthcare services but also boost economic activity in the state, he said.

On the second day of the Global Investors' Meet (Invest Karnataka 2025), the minister participated in a roundtable discussion on "KWIN City and the Healthcare Sector."

Patil said the Knowledge, Well-being, and Innovation (KWIN) City, spanning 5,800 acres, located 50kms from Bengaluru, will emerge as a hub for medical innovation. The project aims to attract investments in research and development related to pharmaceuticals, diagnostics and medical technology which will in turn contribute to the state's overall progress, he noted. "With a growing population and increasing demand for healthcare, healthcare market is expanding at an annual growth rate of 22 per cent," Patil stated. "With our government's favourable policies and incentives, investment and development in the healthcare sector can progress rapidly." *—PTI*

US firm Lam Research to invest Rs 10K cr in Karnataka

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Global semiconductor equipment manufacturing firm, Lam Research has committed an investment of over Rs 10,000 crore in State over the next few years, officials said on Wednesday.

The company has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Karnataka to earmark a land parcel owned by Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) for the planned investment.

The announcement was made on Tuesday at the inaugural ceremony of Invest Karnataka 2025 here.

TVS to set up a Global Capability Centre

TVS Motor Company has said it will set up a global capability center in Karnataka besides expanding its production and engineering operations in Mysuru.

The company will build a test track and set-up new company office infrastructure in the state, it said.

TVSM signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Tuesday with the Government of Karnataka to invest Rs 2,000 crore in the state over the next five years, a statement from the company said.

Speaking at the event on Tuesday, Sudarshan Venu said, "We envision a capability center that will

According to the company, TVSM operates a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Mysuru that employs more than 3,500 people and has an annual production capacity of 1.5 million vehicles.

Nirani Sugars to open Bagalkot

Nirani Sugars signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Karnataka government to establish a state-of-the-art Polylactic Acid manufacturing facility in Bagalkot.

The project with a proposed investment of approximately Rs 2,000 crore is set to be developed over the next three to five years generating 600–800 direct employment opportunities in the region, it said.

The government will facilitate Nirani Sugars in obtaining the necessary approvals, permissions, and incentives as per prevailing policies, ensuring a smooth and timely execution of the project. *—PTI*

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Minister MB Patil during the Global Investors' Meet in Bengaluru on Wednesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

DKS defends police action amid Mysuru unrest

MYSURU, 12 FEB

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday defended the action taken by Mysuru Police in the mob attack on Udayagiri Police station on Mahadevapura road in the city.

Shivakumar told reporters that despite suffering injuries in the stone-pelting, the cops managed to contain the violence. "The police resorted to lathicharge and used tear gas to disperse an unruly crowd," he said.

"As the deputy chief minister of the state, I am saying that police have acted as per the law," Shivakumar said, brushing aside criticism that the police are soft on Muslim protestors. Shivakumar said elders and Muslim religious heads tried to control the violent youth aged between 14 and 16 years but failed. Police have to protect the lives and properties of people living in the vicinity during such incidents, he said. Meanwhile, Mysuru police, who are investigating the Udayagiri Police station violence case, have arrested eight people. The suspects in custody are Syed Suhel, Ayan bin Zabiulla, Syed and Raheel Pasha of Shanthinagar, Syed Sadiq bin Naveed of Ghousiangar, Ajaj bin Abdul Wazeed of Satyanagar, Sadiq Pasha alias Sadiq bin Khaleed Pasha and Arbaz Shareef of Rajivnagar and Shoaiab Pasha of Ghousianagar. *—Salar News*

ATTACKS ON GOVT WORKERS

BJP leaders Chalavadi Narayanaswamy and R Ashoka protest in Bengaluru against alleged attacks on govt officials **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Curtains down on South's Kumbh Mela

MYSURU, 12 FEB

The three-day 13th edition of Kumbh Mela organised by district administration concluded on Wednesday with thousands of devotees taking the holy dip at Triveni Sangama, the confluence of rivers Cauvery, Kapila and Spatika Sarovara in T Narasipura town on Wednesday.

Devotees took the Punya Magha Snana at Triveni Sangama between 9am and 9.30am during the auspicious Meena Lagna and between 12 noon and 1 pm during the Vrushabha Lagna.

Authorities had developed three separate ghats near the Agasteswara, Gunja Narasimhaswamy and Holedande Sri Bhiksheshwara temples to ensure the safety of the devotees.

This year's edition of the "South India's Kumbh Mela" drew an overwhelming response, with devotees arriving in large numbers even from the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Vehicles lined up on all roads connecting to Triveni Sangama, leading to traffic chaos in and around the city. Police had a tough time controlling the crowd.

District in-charge and Social Welfare Minister Dr HC Mahadevappa hailed both police and district administration officials, as well as the religious leaders, who together made the event a big success, as made evident by the response from the devotees. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: SALAR

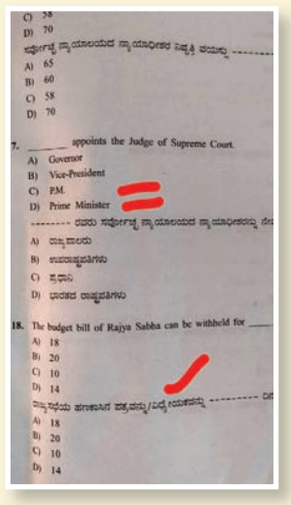
Centre grants ₹25 cr for tourism in Bidar

BIDAR, 12 FEB

Local MP Sagar Khandre said on Wednesday that the Centre has released a grant of Rs 25 crore under the Swadesh Darshan scheme for the development of tourism in Bidar district. Khandre said he had requested funds to enhance the tourism potential of the district, and Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat approved it and released the amount. Following the release of the grant, Khandre met Shekhawat in Delhi and thanked him. He said the amount would be used to promote historical, religious, and cultural tourism in the district. "The tourism department is preparing an action plan, and the funds will be disbursed soon," he said. *—Salar News*

UNDERGRADUATE EXAMS

Blunders in Bidar varsity question papers baffle students



YOHAN P HONNADDI
BIDAR, 12 FEB

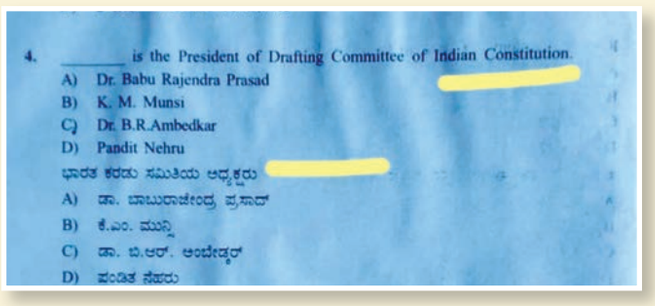
Errors and blunders in Bidar University's question papers for the undergraduate examinations in the current academic year have raised many questions about the diligence of those who prepared them and the varsity's monitoring of the whole process.

The undergraduate exams, which began on 28 January, will conclude on 19 February.

The English version of a question in the BA first semester subject Indian Constitution says, "Who is the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution?" However, the Kannada translation of the same question asks, "Who is the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of India?"

In the same question paper, for the multiple-choice question "Who appoints the judges of the Supreme Court?" the options are missing in the English version, though they are provided in its Kannada translation.

While the English version of the same question paper has fewer errors, several words are incorrectly translated into Kannada. For instance, "court" is mentioned as "courtyard," "judge" as "justice," "bill" as "act" and "President of India Droupadi Murmu" is mentioned only as "Murmu."


4. _____ is the President of Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution.
A) Dr. Babu Rajendra Prasad
B) K. M. Munsi
C) Dr. B.R.Ambedkar
D) Pandit Nehru
ಭಾರತ ಕರಡು ಸಮಿತಿಯ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು
A) ಡಾ. ಬಾಬುರಾಜೇಂದ್ರ ಪ್ರಸಾದ್
B) ಕೆ.ಎಂ. ಮುನ್ಷಿ
C) ಡಾ. ಬಿ.ಆರ್. ಅಂಬೇಡ್ಕರ್
D) ಪಂಡಿತ ನೆಹರು

In the BA first-semester political science question paper, Kannada translations contain erroneous mention of "patriarch" instead of "forefather", "social" as "societal" and "law" as "legal".

Similarly, in the BA third-semester (NEP) question paper, the word "movement" is misprinted as two different words in different places.

A quick glance at these question papers raises suspicion that the translations are done electronically and left unchecked.

Vice Chancellor Dr BS Biradar told Salar News, "I was not aware of these errors in the question papers. We will take disciplinary action against those responsible. A meeting will be held with subject heads to ensure such mistakes do not happen again."

Nagabhushan M Kamathane, a syndicate member and the chairman of the examination reform committee, said, "I will bring up this issue in the committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday and action will be taken against those responsible for this." *—Salar News*

AAP's Amanatullah claims cops framed him in false case

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan denied being on the run and alleged that the Delhi Police was framing him in a false case. In a letter sent to Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora via email, the Okhla MLA claimed that he was in his constituency and not on the run. The Delhi Police registered an FIR against the Okhla MLA for allegedly leading an attack on a police team in Jamia Nagar on Monday. The police said the mob led by Amanatullah Khan helped an accused in an attempt-to-murder case escape from custody. Amanatullah Khan was recently re-elected to the Delhi Assembly, defeating the BJP's Manish Chaudhary. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Madras HC clears way for EC probe into AIADMK dispute

CHENNAI, 12 FEB

Madras High Court on Wednesday vacated a stay against the Election Commission probing the internal disputes of the AIADMK, including the leadership and the subsequent party symbol issues, a ruling seen as a setback to its incumbent chief Edappadi K Palaniswami. A division bench of Justices R Subramanian and G Arul Murugan passed the order on the petitions filed by expelled AIADMK members P Ravindranath (son of former CM O Panneerselvam), K C Palanisamy and Va Pugazhenthi. The court dismissed Palaniswami's petition seeking a stay against the EC looking into issues such as the leadership tussle and the allocation of Two Leaves symbol to the AIADMK. Responding to the verdict, Pugazhenthi said the court "has vacated the stay," against the earlier order in the matter and that there was no bar on the EC holding a probe into the matter anymore. *—PTI*

BJP poll panel meet to discuss Delhi poll result

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Delhi BJP's various poll committees started a review of the assembly election results at the saffron party's city unit office. The review began with members of the poll management committee discussing the results, which saw the BJP return to power in the national capital after more than 26 years. "The senior leaders lauded the role of the committees and their members in ensuring the party's grand victory," a leader who attended the meeting said. Meetings with other poll committees, to be attended by BJP district presidents and other office-bearers, will continue, he added. The BJP had set up more than 40 election-related committees to handle campaigning and other related works ahead of the Delhi polls. *—PTI*

Shinde: Shiv Sena to expand its reach across M'rashtra

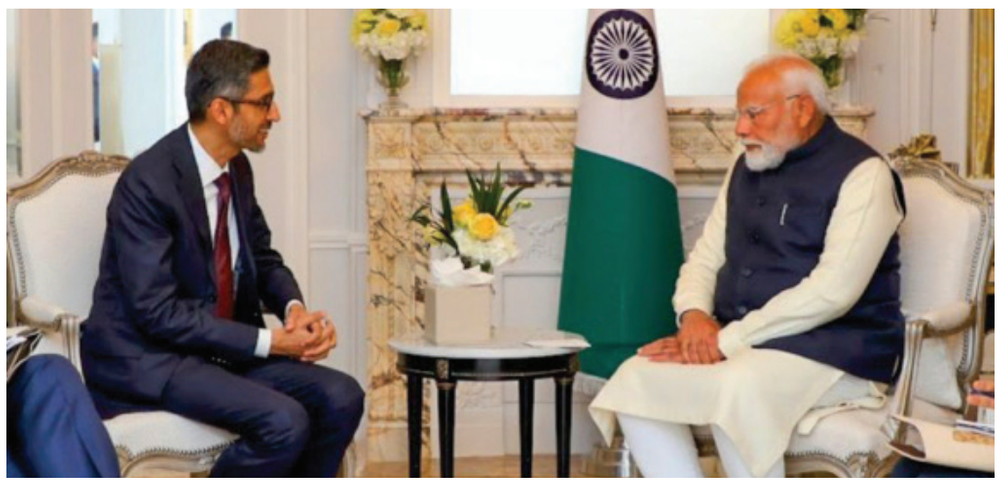
THANE, 12 FEB

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday declared his party Shiv Sena would expand its influence across the state and asserted its winning momentum in the 2024 assembly elections would continue in future polls. Shinde, who charted his own political course in June 2022 after leading a revolt against the leadership of the united Shiv Sena, reaffirmed his commitment to spreading the party's ideology and growing its presence.\ In his speech, Shinde highlighted the party's new initiative, 'Gaon Tethe Shakaha, Gar Tethe Sena,' which is aimed at expanding the Shiv Sena's reach across the state by setting up more party branches in villages and towns. He urged party workers to intensify their efforts and bring in more people into the Shiv Sena fold. *—PTI*

PM, Macron pledge for stronger Indo-Pacific ties

France's Prez Macron bats for India's permanent seat at UNSC

PARIS, 12 FEB



PM Modi meets Google CEO Sundar Pichai in Paris and discusses 'India's digital transformation' **PHOTO: PTI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday called for enhancing trade and investment ties between the two countries and committed to further deepening their engagement in the Indo-Pacific and various global forums and initiatives.

After their wide-ranging talks, the two leaders also underlined their commitment to concrete actions to ensure that the global AI sector can drive beneficial social, economic, and environmental outcomes in the public interest.

A joint statement issued after the meeting here said the talks covered a full spectrum of bilateral relations, as well as key global and regional issues.

The two leaders stressed an urgent need for reform in the United Nations Security Council and agreed to coordinate closely on various global issues, including the UNSC matters.

French President Macron reiterated France's firm support for India's permanent membership of the UNSC.

The two leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to India-France Strategic Partnership while noting that it has steadily evolved into a multifaceted relationship over the past 25 years.

The leaders also called for enhancing trade and investment ties.

An agreement was also signed for hosting 10 Indian startups at the French start-up incubator Advanced Modular Reactors and Small Modular Reactors.

Other outcomes included the renewal of MoU between the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Commissariat a l'Energie Atomique et aux Energies Alternatives of France (CAE), for cooperation with the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP).

This is Modi's sixth visit to France and follows Macron's visit to India in January 2024 as the Chief Guest for the 75th Republic Day of India.

Both leaders had a detailed conversation on international issues, including the Middle-East and the war in Ukraine, the statement said. *—PTI*

2ND TIME IN 2 DAYS

BJP's Patra meets Manipur Guv amid political crisis

IMPHAL, 12 FEB

Ajay Kumar Bhalla **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

Amid a political crisis in strife-torn Manipur, senior BJP leader Sambit Patra on Wednesday morning called on Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan here, sources said.

They held discussions for some time but the outcome of the meeting is not yet known.

Patra, the BJP's Northeast in-charge, later headed for a hotel, where he is likely to meet party MLAs during the day.

A BJP delegation led by Patra had on Tuesday met Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan amid a leadership crisis following the resignation of N Biren Singh as the chief minister of the ethnic violence-hit state on 9 February.

Meanwhile, experts have warned that with no one staking claim to form the government so far, the BJP-ruled Manipur may head towards a constitutional crisis.

If the situation remains so, the state is likely to be under President's rule, they said.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh had on 9 February resigned from his post and Governor A K Bhalla accepted the same. He requested the CM to continue in office until alternative arrangements are made.

Manipur's BJP MLA Karam Shyam on Wednesday claimed that there is "no constitutional crisis" after the resignation of Singh.

Shyam said the ongoing issues would be resolved by the Centre with the help of legislators.

"I don't know about the President's Rule. I think the problem (ongoing leadership crisis) will be resolved by the Centre with the help of the legislators. I think there is no constitutional crisis in Manipur," the BJP MLA said. *—PTI*

WB govt presents ₹3.8L cr budget, hikes DA by 4%

KOLKATA, 12 FEB

West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya on Wednesday presented a Rs 3.89-lakh crore budget for 2025-26 with a significant focus on social welfare, and announced a four per cent hike in dearness allowance (DA) for state government employees.

The government also unveiled a series of infrastructure and agricultural development projects in its budget, allocating significant funds for rural connectivity, river erosion control, and agrarian support initiatives.

In the last full-fledged budget of the Mamata Banerjee government before the 2026 Assembly elections, Bhattacharya tabled in the assembly a Rs 3.89 lakh crore budget.

An additional Rs 1,500 crore has been allocated for this project in the next financial year.

Speaking at a press conference after the budget was presented, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "Lakshmi Bhandar is a popular scheme. Altogether 2.21 crore women benefit from it. The state government spends Rs 50,000 crore on this. Other states, especially the BJP-ruled states, are copying the Lakshmi Bhandar scheme." *—PTI*

Cong 'laughs' as BJP says Gogoi's wife has Pak links

NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI, 12 FEB

BJP on Wednesday accused Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi's wife of having links with Pakistan and the ISI, a charge rejected by the deputy Opposition leader in the Lok Sabha as "laughable and entertaining".

BJP resorted to such "baseless allegations" as it has no issue to raise, Gogoi hit back.

He alleged that the BJP had carried out a similar "smear campaign" against him and his family ahead of last year's Lok Sabha polls and the people, in reply, elected him from the Jorhat parliamentary constituency.

Gogoi's reaction came after BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia alleged, "Some serious concerning facts related to national security have come to light. Links of Elizabeth Colburn, the wife of deputy leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi, with Pakistan Planning Commission Advisor Ali Tauqeer Sheikh and the ISI, have come to light."

"It is expected that Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge ji and Gaurav Gogoi will render a clarification about their relations with Pakistan and the ISI," he told PTI.

Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in a post on X, "Serious questions need to be answered regarding allegations of ISI links, leading young individuals to the Pakistan embassy for brainwashing and radicalisation, and the refusal to take Indian citizenship for the past 12 years." *—PTI*

Oppn walks out of Puducherry Assembly

Puducherry CM N Rangasamy speaks during a session of the Assembly **PHOTO: PTI**

PUDUCHERRY, 12 FEB

Opposition legislators from the DMK and Congress staged a walkout from the Puducherry Assembly on Wednesday, protesting the Centre's 'continued neglect' in sanctioning funds for the union territory.

Leading the protest, DMK Opposition leader R Siva told the House that the Union government had 'failed' to allocate sufficient funds for Puducherry to meet its budget commitments.

He also claimed that funds for infrastructure development and port expansion had not been provided as required.

Siva further alleged that despite repeated requests from the Puducherry government to waive loans owed to the Centre, no action had been taken.

He argued that the financial crunch was hindering the union territory's progress.

Denying the allegations, Speaker R Selvam, Chief Minister N Rangasamy, Home Minister A Namassivayam, and treasury bench members asserted that the Centre "was fully cooperating with Puducherry". *—PTI*

TN parties play down PK's strategy buzz for TVK

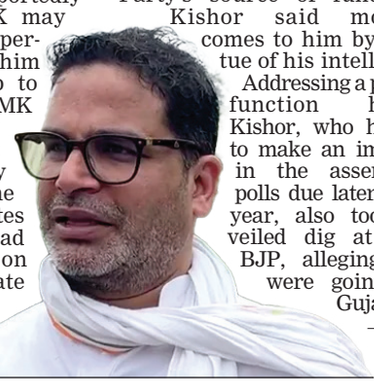
CHENNAI, 12 FEB

As the fledgling Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam led by actor-politician Vijay is buzzing with intra-party brainstorming following election strategist Prashant Kishor's involvement as a special adviser to guide the party towards victory in the Assembly election due in 2026, Tamil Nadu parties on Wednesday dismissed it as nothing unusual.

Asked on Kishor reportedly estimating that TVK may have "around 15-20 percent voteshare" and him outlining a roadmap to increase it further, DMK leader and Minister P K Sekar Babu said it was usual for every party that went to the electorate seeking votes to assert that they had 100 percent votes on their side. In the state Assembly election due next year people are prepared to reelect "people's Chief Minister M K Stalin," and they are only waiting for the election.

Prashat Kishor on Tuesday held discussions with functionaries of TVK as part of efforts to formulate a winning strategy for the party in the 2026 Assembly election.

Meanwhile, hitting back at the ruling JD(U) in Bihar, which has been targeting him over his fledgling Jan Suraaj Party's source of funding, Kishor said money comes to him by virtue of his intellect.



Addressing a party function here, Kishor, who hopes to make an impact in the assembly polls due later this year, also took a veiled dig at the BJP, alleging all were going to Gujarat. *—PTI*

BJP urges TN to drop case against leader over laddu row

Tamil Nadu BJP on Wednesday demanded the DMK regime to withdraw a police case against its senior functionary who had sought quality audit of ghee supplied to the Palani Dhandayuthapani Swamy temple following the Tirupati laddu controversy. Citing the arrest of Dindigul based AR Dairy's Rajasekaran in the Tirupati laddu adulteration case filed by the Special Investigation Team, BJP leader Narayanan Thirupathy said when the controversy broke last year, the party's industry wing vice-president Selvakumar had pointed out that Rajasekaran was a trustee of the Palani temple. Selvakumar had alleged that the same firm that faced allegations in the laddu matter could have supplied ghee to the Palani temple as well and had hence batted for a quality audit there. *—PTI*

TO BE TABLED TODAY IN PARL

Banks must report crypto deals in new IT Bill

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The bill introduced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will have 536 sections and 23 chapters running into 622 pages **PHOTO: PTI**

The new Income Tax Bill, which will be introduced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, mandates banks and entities to report crypto transactions, tightening regulatory oversight.

The bill will have 536 sections and 23 chapters running into 622 pages, is likely to be introduced in the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

The Bill once enacted will replace six-decade old Income Tax Act 1961, which over the years became bulkier and complex with amendments.

The proposed law replaces the term 'previous year' as mentioned in the Income Tax Act, 1961 with 'tax year'. Also, the concept of assessment year has been done away with.

Currently, for income earned in the previous year (say 2023-24), tax is paid in assessment year (say 2024-25). This previous year and assessment year concept has been removed and only tax year has been brought in.

The Income Tax Bill, 2025 comprises 536 sections, higher than 298 sections of the current Income-Tax Act, 1961. The existing law has 14 schedules which will increase to 16 in the new legislation.

As per the proposed law, clearer tax treatment on stock options (ESOPs) have been included for reduced tax disputes and includes judicial pronouncements of the last 60 years for more clarity.

- The proposed law replaces the term 'previous year' as mentioned in the Income Tax Act, 1961 with 'tax year'. Also, the concept of assessment year has been done away with

A key departure from the Income-Tax Act, 1961, is that previously, the Income Tax Department had to approach Parliament for various procedural matters, tax schemes, and compliance frameworks.

As per new law, the CBDT can now frame tax administration rules, introduce compliance measures, and enforce digital tax monitoring systems without requiring frequent legislative amendments as per the Clause 533.

After introduction, the bill is likely to be sent to a parliamentary standing committee for scrutiny. *—PTI*

Ex-prez Pranab's son joins Cong after 4 yrs in TMC

KOLKATA, 12 FEB

Abhijit Mukherjee **PHOTO: ANI**

Former President Pranab Mukherjee's son Abhijit Mukherjee rejoined the Congress on Wednesday after a four-year-long placid stint in the Trinamool Congress.

The former Lok Sabha MP was given the Congress membership at the party's state headquarters here in the presence of AICC general secretary and West Bengal in-charge Ghulam Ahmed Mir.

Regretting his decision to have joined the TMC in 2021, Mukherjee said, "I apologise for this; it was not right for me to leave the Congress."

"This is my second birthday in the Congress and politics," Mukherjee told reporters after being handed over the party flag by the national and state leadership.

Claiming that there is no alternative to the grand old party in the country's politics, he said, "Only the Congress takes along all people irrespective of their caste, creed and religion."

Mukherjee said that he had expressed his desire to rejoin the Congress in June last year, but owing to different state elections, it could take place now.

He returned to the Congress four years after switching over to the Trinamool Congress in July 2021.

Mukherjee had not been seen in a much active role during his stint in the TMC.

Maintaining that Mukherjee has come back to the "right party," Mir said that his joining will help the Congress in its efforts to strengthen the party's base in West Bengal. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Ayodhya Ram temple head priest dies

LUCKNOW, 12 FEB

Mahant Satyendra Das, the chief priest of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, died at a hospital here on Wednesday. The 85-year-old was admitted to the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI) earlier this month after he suffered brain stroke. He served as the head priest of the temple since he was 20-years-old, including during the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992. Das, who hailed from the Nirvani Akhara, was among the most accessible saints of Ayodhya and the go-to person for many mediapersons from across the country wanting information on Ayodhya and Ram temple developments. He was barely nine months into his job as chief priest when the Babri mosque was demolished on 6 December, 1992. *—PTI*

Drugs worth Rs 173.73 cr seized in Mizoram

AIZAWL, 12 FEB

Methamphetamine tablets worth Rs 173.73 crore have been seized along the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram's Champhai district, an Assam Rifles statement said on Wednesday. Acting on a tip-off, Assam Rifles and Mizoram Police jointly made the seizure at a border crossing point in Zokhawthar on 9 February, it said. The joint team spotted suspected individuals carrying the illegal consignment and intercepted them, it said. The suspects, however, got alert and ran away leaving behind the consignment. *—PTI*

Elvish booked for saying R'than cops escorted him

JAIPUR, 12 FEB

An FIR has been registered against YouTuber Elvish Yadav for posting a misleading video claiming that he was escorted by the Rajasthan Police for a music video shoot in Jaipur, officials said on Wednesday. The police have dismissed his claim, stating that no official security was provided to Yadav and a case has been registered against him damaging Rajasthan police's reputation. The controversy erupted on Monday after Yadav posted a video where he was travelling in a car driven by Krishnavardhan Singh Khachariyawas, son of former Rajasthan minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas. In the video, a police vehicle was seen moving ahead of Krishnavardhan's car with Yadav claiming that that police was escorting them. During their conversation, Krishnavardhan says that the police vehicles would change as they moved through different jurisdictions. However, the Rajasthan Police has rejected these claims. *—PTI*

IIT-M patents breast cancer drug delivery system

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras have developed and patented a nextg-Generation drug delivery system to treat breast cancer, which is one of the leading causes of mortality among women globally. According to officials, the researchers have leveraged the unique properties of nanomaterials to design drug delivery systems that can undertake targeted delivery of anti-cancer drugs to cancerous cells. The innovation offers a safer and highly effective alternative to the conventional treatment options. An Indian Patent was granted in the last month for this research marking a significant milestone in the journey of translation and commercialization of the innovation. *—PTI*

No discrimination in edu: SC on Rohingyas

A PIL seeks free education for Rohingya children free of cost, irrespective of Aadhaar cards

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

No child will be discriminated against in education, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while fixing for next week a plea seeking a direction to the Centre and the Delhi governments to grant Rohingya refugees in the City access to public schools and hospitals.

The top court posted the matter for further hearing after 10 days.

Senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the NGO Rohingya Human Rights Initiative, pointed out that the Rohingya refugees have United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) cards.

On 31 January, the top court asked the NGO to apprise the court where the Rohingya refugees have settled in the city and the facilities accessible to them.

Gonsalves said the NGO sought access to public schools and hospitals to Rohingya refugees as they were denied the access due to lack of Aadhaar cards.

Gonsalves said Rohingya refugees resided in Shaheen Bagh, Kalindi Kunj and Khajuri Khas areas of Delhi.

Rohingya refugees reside in Shaheen Bagh, Kalindi Kunj and Khajuri Khas areas of Delhi *PHOTO: ANI*

The top court had said it asked the questions to understand if they lived in camps, the nature of relief would be different than the one mentioned in the PIL.

The PIL has sought a direction to authorities to grant admission to all Rohingya children free of cost irrespective of Aadhaar cards and allow them to participate in all examinations, including Classes 10 and 12 and graduation, without government insistence on the ID proof.

The PIL also sought extension of all government benefits such as free health services in government hospitals, subsidised food grains as available under Antyodya Anna Yojana scheme and benefits under the Food Security Act to Rohingya families as available to other citizens, irrespective of citizenship. *—PTI*

SC denies Indrani plea to travel abroad

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed the plea of Indrani Mukerjea, accused of killing her daughter Sheena Bora, against a ruling denying her permission to travel abroad.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal directed the trial court to conduct the proceedings in the case within a year and upheld the Bombay High Court order refusing her plea.

"There is no guarantee that you will come back," it said. Mukerjea was arrested in August 2015 after the murder of Bora came to light. She was granted bail by the Supreme Court in May 2022. Bora, 24, was allegedly strangled to death in a car by Mukerjea, her then-driver Shyam var Rai and former husband Sanjeev Khanna in April 2012 in Mum bai. Her remains were then burnt. *—PTI*

Indrani Mukerjea

- Bora, 24, was allegedly strangled to death in a car by Mukerjea, her then-driver Shyam var Rai and former husband Sanjeev Khanna in April 2012 in Mumbai.

UPS notified for judicial officers, Centre tells SC

The Centre on Wednesday informed the Supreme Court that it recently notified the Unified Pension Scheme which might address the concerns of judicial officers. The matter would be heard after 12 weeks. The case raises concerns over the disbursement of pension to officers of the district judiciary and retired high court judges. The top court is dealing with salaries, arrears and allowances of the officers of district judiciary.

Dumbbells hung from pvt parts: 5 arrested for ragging in Kerala

KOTTAYAM, 13 FEB

Five third-year students have been arrested for allegedly ragging first year students at the Government Nursing College, police said here on Wednesday.

Police registered a case after three first-year students lodged a complaint alleging that the ragging had been going on for nearly three months at the institute.

According to the complaint, the ragging began last November.

The students alleged that they were forced to stand naked and were subjected to brutal acts using dumbbells meant for weightlifting.

Further allegations include injuries inflicted using compasses and similar objects followed by the application of lotion on the wounds.

Additionally, they were forced to have cream applied to their faces, heads, and mouths.

Police registered a case after three students lodged a complaint alleging that the ragging had been going on for three months *PHOTO: X*

When the victims screamed in agony, the lotion was forcibly smeared into their mouths. The seniors allegedly filmed these acts and threatened the juniors with dire consequences, including jeopardising their academic futures, if they dared to report the abuse.

The complaint also states that senior students regularly extorted money from juniors on Sundays to buy alcohol and frequently assaulted them.

Unable to bear the harassment any longer, three students finally lodged the complaint with the Kottayam Gandhinagar police.

The incident comes weeks after a 15-year-old schoolboy in Kochi died by suicide. The student's mother alleged that her son was bullied by students which pushed him towards his death. *—PTI*

UP newborn declared dead, then eaten by dogs

JALAUN, 12 FEB

The body of an infant, allegedly partially eaten by dogs, was found dumped with garbage at the district women's hospital in Lalitpur, officials said on Wednesday.

Medical superintendent Meenakshi Devi said Sangeeta, a resident of Bahadurpur village in the Madawara block, had been admitted to the hospital with labour pain on 9 February.

"She gave birth to a premature baby at 6.50 pm that day. Due to an underdeveloped brain and skull, the infant was shifted to the Special Newborn Care Unit. The baby died at 7.30pm on the same day," she said. "The hospital then handed over the body to the family," she added. Sangeeta's husband Akhilesh claimed that a hospital nurse instructed them to hand over the body to an individual who would cremate the infant for Rs 200. *—PTI*

TOTAL TOLL AT 8

Mumbai reports first fatality due to GBS

MUMBAI, 12 FEB

A 53-year-old man has died of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) at a hospital in Mumbai, the first fatality here due to the nerve disorder, officials said on Wednesday.

The patient, resident of Mumbai's Wadala area and working as a ward boy in a civic-run hospital, had visited Pune 16 days before being admitted to the hospital, which has witnessed the GBS outbreak.

GBS is a rare condition in which a person's immune system attacks the peripheral nerves, resulting in muscle weakness, loss of sensation in the legs and/or arms, as well as problems swallowing or breathing.

The patient was admitted to the Nair Hospital on 23 January, following complaints of weakness in legs.

The patient had not shown symptoms like fever and diarrhoea.

Meanwhile, a 16-year-old girl from neighbouring Palghar district is currently undergoing treatment for GBS at the Nair Hospital, the BMC said.

Mumbai reported its first case of GBS on February 7 after a 64-year-old woman, resident of Andheri (East), was diagnosed with the nerve disorder, officials earlier said. The Pune region has so far reported seven deaths suspected to have been caused by the GBS. The tally of suspected and confirmed GBS cases in Pune region on Tuesday reached 197, according to health department officials. *—PTI*

Ex-Cong MP faces 2nd conviction in 1984 Sikh riots

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

With a Delhi Court finding former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar guilty, it is his second conviction with respect to 1984 anti-Sikh riots and he faces two more cases.

Kumar's conviction came in a case over the murders of two people, Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh during the violence in Delhi's Saraswati Vihar on 1 November, 1984.

The judge would hear on February 18 the arguments on the quantum of punishment. The case attracts a maximum punishment of death penalty and life-term imprisonment as the minimum sentence.

Kumar was awarded life imprisonment by the high court in a case over the killings of five Sikhs in Raj Nagar Part-I area in Palam Colony of southwest Delhi on 1-2 November, 1984 and burning down of a Gurudwara in Raj Nagar Part-II.

His appeal against the conviction is pending in the Supreme Court.

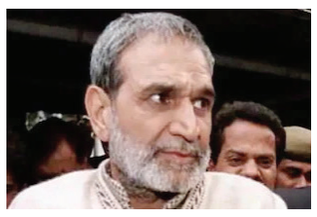


PHOTO: PTI

- Two other appeals are currently pending before the High Court against his acquittal in two other cases by the trial courts.

Two other appeals are currently pending before the High Court against his acquittal in two other cases by the trial courts.

In the Delhi trial courts, there are two cases pending against Kumar, including one related to the violence near a Gurdwara situated in Gulab Bagh, Nawada, in which a judge put him on trial in August 2023.

A Delhi court is also conducting trial in a case related to riots in Janakpuri and Vikaspuri areas in 1984. *—PTI*

HC summons 2 with same name over Padma Shri row

CUTTACK, 12 FEB

Orissa High Court issued notices to two people with the same name, both of whom claimed to have been conferred Padma Shri award in 2023, to appear before it on 24 February.

On the Padma Shri awardee's list of 2023, the name 'Shri Antaryami Mishra' of Odisha appeared in the 56th position, to be honoured for his contribution to literature and education.

One Antaryami Mishra, who is a journalist, has gone to New Delhi and received the award.

Later, Dr Antaryami Mishra, a physician, moved the High Court claiming that his namesake got the award by impersonating him.

Filing a writ petition, the doctor claimed that he authored 29 books in Odia and other Indian languages, leading to his name being included in the Padma Shri awardee.

According to the petitioner, the journalist has no book to his credit. *—PTI*

Man killed in Wayanad jumbo attack, 2nd in 2 days

WAYANAD, 12 FEB

A 27-year-old tribal man was killed in a wild elephant attack in Wayanad on Wednesday, police said.

The incident was reported from a tribal settlement in Attamala near Chooralmala where landslides claimed several lives in July last year. The victim is Balakrishnan.

Meanwhile, residents protested against the alleged lack of initiatives from the authorities to protect them from wild animal attacks.

They did not allow the body to be taken to the hospital until the authorities assured them of adequate steps to prevent such attacks and provide assistance to the deceased person's family.

They demanded Rs 10 lakh in compensation, a government job for a dependent, and financial support for Balakrishnan's funeral.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Locals complained that wild elephants regularly enter the residential areas of Mundakkai and destroy crops. They sought a permanent solution to the problem.

The incident was reported a day after a 45-year-old man was killed in a wild elephant attack in a forest fringe area in Noolpuzha village on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border in this district.

Meanwhile, the local leadership of the Congress-led UDF has called for a hartal in Wayanad district on Thursday, accusing the state government of 'failing' to take steps to protect people from wild animal attacks. *—PTI*

SOCIAL MEDIA FUMES

Chiranjeevi under fire for saying he is scared Ram Charan might have another girl

HYDERABAD, 12 FEB

Megastar Chiranjeevi's comments about his wish to have a grandson took an unexpected turn on Wednesday, with some social media users criticising his desire for a male child to continue the family lineage.

During a film event here on Tuesday night, when shown a photograph of himself with his granddaughters, Chiranjeevi remarked that he felt like "a ladies' hostel warden, surrounded by several girls at home".

The actor also said he's scared that his son Ram Charan might have another girl child, "I'm scared that he might have a girl again."

He added, "I hope Charan has a boy this time to carry forward our legacy!"

Ram Charan is currently blessed with a baby girl.

Some 'X' users took issue with the "mindset" of wishing specifically for a boy, while many others defended the veteran actor, noting that he did not demean his granddaughters in any way.

Chiranjeevi rules out active role in politics

Dispelling speculation about his political career, Chiranjeevi has said he will stay away from politics for the rest of his life and continue to keep films close to his heart.

He said his younger brother and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan is taking forward his political ideals and service motto.

"For the rest of this birth I will keep films close to my heart and serve the film industry, staying away from politics," he said.

He said many people are having doubts whether he would be active in politics again as some big leaders appear to be keen on bringing him on board.

"There is no (plan) to take to politics. So, don't have such doubts," he said.

Chiranjeevi (69) made a grand entry into politics in 2008 launching the Praja Rajyam Party which merged with the Congress in 2011.

The veteran actor had also served as Union Minister during the UPA regime.

There has been some speculation of late about Chiranjeevi becoming active in politics again. *—PTI*

Why are plastic flowers not in banned items: HC

MUMBAI, 12 FEB

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday sought to know why plastic flowers were not included in the list of single-use plastic items banned by the Union government.

A division bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Bharati Dangre asked if the Centre thought that plastic flowers could be recycled, or are biodegradable.

The court was hearing a petition filed by the Growers' Flower Council of India (GFCI) seeking a direction to the Centre to prohibit the use of plastic flowers.

The petition claimed that the maximum thickness of plastic flowers used for decoration is usually 30 microns. Various notifications issued by both central and Maharashtra governments prohibit the production, stocking, distribution and sale of single-use plastic items including ones which are less than 100 micron thick, it said.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

The notifications do not specifically mention plastic flowers. The government should ban plastic flowers with less than 100 micron thickness, the petition said. *—PTI*

A NEW MOON

People celebrate the Cap Go Meh festival in Bekasi, Indonesia. The festival marks the end of the Chinese New Year celebrations ***PHOTO: PTI***

Indians get scammed to fight Russia-Ukraine war

An apartment in Ukraine explodes after a Russian tank opens fire. The Indian government said 126 Indians served in the Russian army, with at least 12 dying and 16 missing ***PHOTO: PTI***

Azad Yousuf Kumar, 32, from south Kashmir's Pulwama district, told DW that while looking for employment opportunities abroad in December 2023, he came across a YouTube channel advertising lucrative security positions in Russia.

Kumar said that he was enticed by the prospects and claims to have paid the company behind the now-deleted channel around 130,000 rupees for travel and processing fees. He said that he was willing to do so as he hadn't found work locally despite being a commerce graduate.

Kumar explained that he had no idea that he would eventually become stranded along the Russia-Ukraine border with a dozen other Indians and end up fighting in Russia's war in Ukraine for several months.

"I endured near-death experiences, including being injured during combat training, all while becoming contracted to the Russian army to fight in the Ukraine war," Kumar told DW from his residence in Indian-administered Kashmir.

Kumar told DW that he faced the brutal realities of war when he ended up stationed in Ukraine's war-torn city of Luhansk. He claimed that he and others dug trenches amid artillery fire and incoming shells — which, he said, often landed very close to their positions.

"Just a couple of weeks into training, I suffered a gunshot wound to my foot due to the unfamiliarity of holding the weapon," Kumar said.

"When I came back home after nine months, it was a miracle. I had fallen prey to a massive employment scam like many others from India. Yes, there are flashes of my frightening stay there but my young daughter now provides me solace," he said.

Last month, India's government admitted that 126 Indian nationals have served in the Russian army. At least 12 Indian nationals have died in fighting and 16 others are missing. So far, 96 people have returned to India after their discharge from the Russian armed forces, it said.

"We have also reiterated our demand for the early discharge of the remaining Indian nationals," said the Foreign Ministry's official spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal.

Syed Ilyas Hussaini, a 23-year-old from Karnataka, and his friends Abdul Nayeem and Mohammed Sameer Ahmed said they were lured by the promise of lucrative security guard positions in Russia. They reported being assured of monthly salaries of between 70,000–100,000 rupees.

But instead of the promised security jobs, they claim to have been coerced into joining a private military company and deployed to the Russia-Ukraine border along with people from Nepal and Cuba.

"My friends and I were coerced into signing contracts written in Russian, a language I did not understand," Hussaini told DW. "Our passports and mobiles were taken away"

"We feared we would never get out alive, and when a colleague, Hemil Mangukiya from Surat, was killed in a drone attack while digging a trench, I thought I would die, too," said Hussaini.

In March last year, Hussaini described how he got hold of a mobile phone and, together with other Indian nationals, recorded a video message highlighting the dire situation they were facing.

"It went viral, and that is when the government and politicians woke up. Then it was months before we were sent back to Moscow and came back home in September," claimed Hussaini. The video has since been deleted.

In July, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Moscow, Russia promised to discharge any Indians who had been falsely induced to join its army, according to Reuters. The decision was not formally announced by Russia.

Many said they were lured into Russia simply because they were desperate for work and the risk of going abroad appeared better than staying in India with little to no job prospects.

Mohammad Sufiyan from Hyderabad told DW,"For many days after my return I had nightmares of drones dropping bombs and bullets whizzing and people shouting." He claims to have been positioned at a camp some 50 kilometers inside Ukrainian territory. "If we protested, the commanding officer fired near where we were standing to scare us. It is a miracle how I escaped death," he said. *—DW News*

SALAR سالار

US watches in horror as Musk takes over 'state'

Many Americans have watched in horror as Elon Musk, the world's richest person, has been permitted to tear through various offices of the United States government in recent weeks.

Backed by President Donald Trump, and supported by a small team of true believers, he has successfully laid siege to America's vast federal bureaucracy.

On Tuesday, Trump signed an executive order giving Musk even more power. It requires federal agencies to cooperate with his "Department of Government Efficiency" (known as DOGE) in cutting their staffing levels and restricting new hires.

In his first comments to the media since joining the Trump administration as a "special" government employee, Musk also responded to criticism that he's launching a "hostile takeover" of the US government.

Musk move is a form of state capture. Under the pretence of maximising government efficiency and productivity, DOGE has amassed quite a bit of power. It has penetrated the massive system responsible for virtually all government payments, breached sensitive databases and private medical records, circumvented routine conflict of interest and transparency requirements, dismantled the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and gained access to the computer systems of a number of federal agencies.

Musk's blitzkrieg across Washington – carried out in apparent violation of numerous federal laws – has not only stirred confusion, but defied explanation.

A popular argument, supported by some historians and commentators, is that Musk's actions amount to a coup. They argue this is not a coup in the classic sense of a takeover of the physical centres of power. Rather, it's a seizure of digital infrastructure by an unelected group seeking to undo democratic practices and violate human rights. This term, however, is not technically correct. However, since Musk and Trump are bedfellows in this plot, the tech billionaire is clearly not trying to violently unseat the president.

Another possible explanation: this is a self-coup. This describes a situation in which the sitting national leader takes decisive illegitimate action to perpetuate the incumbent's power. Though self-coups are becoming more common, Musk's chief target – the bureaucracy – does not nominally offset presidential power.

More accurately, Musk's siege amounts to a form of "state capture." This refers to the appropriation of state resources by political actors for their own ends: either private or political.

By this logic, Musk's aim could be to capture different pieces of the US government and turn the state into a tool for wealth extraction.

State capture is a relatively simple but extremely destructive process. This is how it has played out in countries like Indonesia, Hungary, Nigeria, Russia, Sri Lanka and South Africa (Musk's birthplace).

First, political and corporate elites gain control of formal institutions, information systems and bureaucratic policy-making processes. Then, they use this power to apply rules selectively, make biased decisions and allocate resources based on private interests (rather than the public good).

By taking over how the American government does business, Musk could be seeking to enrich a powerful network of allies.

The first beneficiary would be Trump, the second Musk and other Silicon Valley mega-billionaires. and the third the small army of engineers and technicians working with Musk. This kind of quid pro quo is how authoritarian regimes work.

As Musk continues his assault on the federal bureaucracy, the American people will suffer the consequences.

The most immediate impact of state capture worse decisions are made. Musk's actions will likely degrade the standard of living at home and endanger American lives abroad. It also means there would be less accountability for the Trump administration's public policy decisions. With a lack of congressional and independent oversight, key decisions over the distribution of economic benefits could be made informally behind closed doors.

Finally, state capture is inseparable from corruption. Doing business with the US federal government could soon require one to pass a loyalty test rather than a public interest test.

Trump's enemies will encounter more hurdles, while his allies will have a seat at the table. *—PTI*

Elon Musk earlier defended the steep cuts implemented by DOGE ***PHOTO: ANI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Families of unreleased Israeli hostages terrified as ceasefire tethers

After 16 months of excruciating uncertainty, Idit Ohel finally received word this week that her 24-year-old son, a hostage in Gaza, is still alive.

She said she fainted upon hearing the brutal details of his captivity from freed hostages who had been held by Hamas since 7 October, 2023. Bound by chains in an underground tunnel, Alon Ohel has subsisted on a piece of bread or less each day.

"He hasn't seen sunlight in 493 days," she told reporters on Monday.

As the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas seems increasingly at risk of falling apart — Hamas says it will not free three hostages on Saturday as planned, and Israel says it's ready to resume the war if it doesn't — families of the hostages are struggling to maintain hope.

They are pleading with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to give up on the ceasefire framework, and to speed up the timeline of releases if possible.

Their worries have been exacerbated by President Donald Trump's demand that all of the hostages be freed by Saturday — and his insistence that Gaza be emptied of all Palestinians and redeveloped as a tourist enclave controlled by the United States.

The emaciated state of three hostages released last Saturday has infuriated terrified families of the remaining hostages. The situation is especially difficult for relatives of hostages who are not on the list of 33 hostages expected to be released in the ceasefire's first, six-week phase, which began on 19 January. The agreement requires Israel to free 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

Two hostages released on Saturday, Or Levy and Eli Sharabi, were held together with Alon Ohel, and a fourth hostage, Eliya Cohen. The four were held underground since their kidnapping, Idit Ohel said.

Cohen is expected to be released in the ceasefire's first stage; Ohel would be freed in the second stage, if Israel and Hamas reach that point. Levy, Ohel, and Cohen were kidnapped from a bomb shelter near a music festival in southern Israel, along with Hersh Goldberg-Polin, an American-Israeli who was killed in captivity in August.

"It breaks my heart to know he was chained and to know what happened to him in the tunnels," Cohen's fiancée, Ziv Abud, 27, told reporters on Tuesday.

The returned hostages said that Cohen had lost more than 20 kilograms and had a bullet in his leg that did not receive medical attention. While they were with him, Cohen was unaware if Abud had survived the Hamas attack.

Israel captives escorted on stage before being released during the first phase of the ceasefire. The released hostages said they were held in underground tunnels during their 493 days of captivity ***PHOTO: PTI***

During the 7 October attack, militants tossed grenades and sprayed bullets inside the concrete bomb shelter near the music festival, where almost 30 people had crammed inside. At least 16 people inside the shelter were killed.

Abud said she was protected by the crush of bodies above her. Going in and out of consciousness, she spent hours laying beneath the bodies of her nephew and his girlfriend.

For families of hostages who are not scheduled for release in the first phase of the ceasefire, its uncertainty is even more difficult to bear.

Israel and Hamas were set last week to begin talks on a second phase of the ceasefire that would include an end to the war and the release of the remaining hostages. But those efforts have been frozen while the two sides trade accusations.

Tamir Nimrodi, 20, an Israeli soldier kidnapped from his post at a main crossing between Israel and Gaza, is not on the list to be freed in the first stage.

His mother, Herut, said Hamas' plan to delay the next hostage release came as a shock. It's been difficult watching the hostage releases over the past few weeks, Nimrodi said, especially the emotional videos of hostages reuniting with their families.

On the one hand, each reunion is a step closer to bringing back her son, whom she described as a creative person who loves riding horses. But Nimrodi does not know if her son, who also holds German citizenship, is alive.

The other two soldiers he was kidnapped with were killed, and she has not received any sign of life from him. "I know there is a chance I won't get to hold my son," she said.

According to Israeli media, returning hostages have provided proof of life for at least seven Israeli hostages, including Cohen and Ohel.

Nimrodi doesn't know what is worse — to believe her son is dead, or to receive information that he is alive, but held in conditions like Alon Ohel. "I have no idea what he's going through, I'm scared to even imagine," she said. Idit Ohel received the information about her son's condition less than an hour before she went on Israel's Channel 12 news programme.

She sat at the news desk sobbing on live TV, pleading with the government to continue to the second stage of the ceasefire and bring all of the hostages home as soon as possible.

Alon, who also has German and Serbian citizenship, is a talented pianist. The family has placed pianos across Israel in his honour, many of which are yellow, the colour associated with the struggle for the hostages.

The family marked Alon's second birthday in captivity on Monday evening in Tel Aviv, where his mother addressed the Israeli government. "After all the testimonies you heard from the survivors, how do you allow this situation to continue?" she said. Alon remembered his younger sister, Inbar, had a birthday on Saturday and delivered her a message through hostages who were released that day. *—PTI*

US prepares matching tariffs on partners

They (Ukraine) may make a deal; they may not make a deal. They may be Russian someday, or they may not be Russian someday
-Donald Trump, US President

Trump tells govt agencies: Hire 1 for every 4 who leave

In his latest bid to slash government spending, US President Donald Trump has directed government agencies across the country to work with billionaire Elon Musk to cut their workforce, according to news agency Bloomberg. The fact sheet said agencies would be allowed to hire only one employee for every four workers they fire. Agencies exempted from this directive include those in law enforcement, national security, immigration, and public safety roles. It's unclear if DOGE has the authority to enact mass layoffs in government agencies yet. *—Agencies*

The tariffs may trigger retaliatory moves, disrupting growth

WASHINGTON DC, 12 FEB

President Donald Trump is taking additional action to upset the world trade system, with plans to sign an order as soon as Wednesday that would require that US tariffs on imports match the tax rates charged by other countries.

"It's time to be reciprocal," Trump told reporters earlier this week. "You'll be hearing that word a lot. Reciprocal. If they charge us, we charge them."

He had suggested that the order would come on Tuesday or Wednesday. But when Tuesday passed without the tariffs being officially announced, Trump was asked if he would sign the order on Wednesday and Trump answered: "We'll see what happens."

As Trump has unleashed a series of tariffs after being in power for less than a month, he has fully taken ownership of the path of the US economy.

It's a bet that his economic ideas can eventually deliver meaningful results for voters, even if by Trump's own admission the import taxes could involve some financial pain in the form of inflation and economic disruptions. For all of Trump's talk, the impact will likely depend on the details of the tariffs and how other nations respond.

A reciprocal tariffs order could amount to a substantial tax hike to be shouldered largely by US consumers and businesses as the Census Bureau reported that the country had total imports of USD 4.1 trillion last year. The tariffs could set off retaliatory measures by trading partners that could roil growth around the globe and reset where the United States stands with allies and rivals alike.

Meanwhile, Trump's freeze on foreign assistance has dealt a blow to organisations fighting human trafficking and forced labour in Cambodia, where tens of thousands of people are held captive and forced to work in call centres running telephone scams. *—PTI*

Musk denies hostile takeover of US govt

WASHINGTON DC, 12 FEB

Tesla CEO Elon Musk denied a "hostile takeover" of the US government and defended his cost-cutting plans as he made a surprise first appearance at the White House.

Musk, accompanied by his four-year-old son X, was seen in the Oval Office alongside Donald Trump as the US President signed an executive order to continue downsizing the federal workforce.

The agency has been criticised by Democrats who have accused it of a lack of transparency, and its efforts have also been hampered by legal challenges.

Despite concerns that he's amassing unaccountable power with little transparency, Musk described himself as an open book. He joked that the scrutiny over his sprawling influence over federal agencies was like a "daily proctology exam."

Musk, taking questions from reporters for the first time since joining the Trump administration as a special government employee, defended DOGE's work as "common sense" and "not draconian or radical." *—Agencies*

Elon Musk with his son and Donald Trump at White House **PHOTO: PTI**

Apple changes Gulf of Mexico to Gulf of America

Apple renamed the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America on its maps after an order by Trump was made official by the US Geographic Names Information System.
The move follows Google, which said it would make the change once the official listing was updated and wrote that it had begun rolling out the change.

4 FEMA workers fired over NYC payments

Four federal employees were fired over payments to reimburse New York City for hotel costs for migrants, Department of Homeland Security officials said. They are accused of circumventing leadership to make the transactions, which have been standard through a programme helping with costs to care for rise in migration.

N Korea condemns Trump's Gaza takeover plan

North Korean state media has accused the US of "slaughter and robbery" over Trump's proposed plan to occupy the Gaza Strip and expel its population. "The world is now boiling like a porridge pot over the US' bombshell declaration," the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said in a commentary on Wednesday.

WH bars AP reporter over 'Gulf of America' policy

The White House blocked an Associated Press reporter from an event in the Oval Office after demanding the news agency alter its style on the Gulf of Mexico. The unusual ban, which Trump officials had threatened unless the AP changed the style on the Gulf, could have constitutional free speech implications.

Edu Dept erases records set by trans athletes

The Department of Education asked the NCAA and a key high-school sports organisation to restore titles, it says have been "misappropriated by biological males competing in female categories." NCAA changed its participation policy to restrict competition in women's sports to athletes who were assigned female at birth.

Russia frees American after Trump envoy visit

Russia released an American prisoner Marc Fogel, after the visit by a member of Trump's administration to Russia, in a deal the White House called a positive sign for ending the Ukraine war. The White House said Trump secured the release of Fogel, jailed since 2021 on drug charges, as part of an exchange without offering further details.

Trump admin fires USAID Inspector General Martin

Donald Trump reportedly fired the federal watchdog Paul Martin responsible for overseeing the US Agency for International Development (USAid) on Wednesday, one day after the independent inspector general issued a damning report detailing the impact of the president's sudden dismantling of the agency.

PHOTO: PTI

Alabama wants death penalty for child rape

MONTGOMERY, 12 FEB

Alabama lawmakers on Tuesday advanced legislation that would allow child rapists to be sentenced to death, hoping that the US Supreme Court will revisit its ban on capital punishment for such crimes. The Alabama House of Representatives voted 86–5 for the bill that would allow prosecutors to pursue the death penalty when an adult is convicted of rape or sodomy of a child under 12. The legislation now moves to the Alabama Senate. Florida, Tennessee and at least six other state legislatures have introduced similar measures in the last two years, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. The US Supreme Court in 2008 ruled that the death penalty for child rape is unconstitutional. *—PTI*

Tuscany becomes 1st in Italy to approve assisted suicide

MILAN, 12 FEB

Tuscany approved a bill regulating medically assisted suicide Tuesday, becoming Italy's first region to approve a right-to-die law in the Roman Catholic country after the constitutional court effectively legalized the procedure in 2019. The law requires a medical and ethics commission to consider an end-of-life request for no more than 30 days. If approved, the regional health services must provide the necessary medication and a doctor within 10 days. All medical personnel have the right to opt out. The law passed by a vote of 27-13 in the central Italian region governed by the centre-left. The Italian Constitutional Court ruled in 2019 that assisted suicide was legal for patients affected by an irreversible pathology with intolerable physical and psychological pain. They must be capable of making a free and conscious decision. *—PTI*

Israel to restart war unless hostages return by Saturday

Israeli soldiers work on their tank in southern Israel **PHOTO: PTI**

Jordan King says will accept 2000 Gaza children

Jordan's King Abdullah said that Amman would take in 2,000 sick children from Gaza, seeking to curry favour with a US President Donald Trump who had threatened to withhold aid if Jordan did not agree to take in Palestinians as part of his plan for Washington to take over the enclave and relocate its population. *—Agencies*

JERUSALEM, 12 FEB

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday threatened to withdraw from the ceasefire in Gaza and directed troops to prepare to resume fighting Hamas if the militant group does not release more hostages on Saturday.

Hamas first said on Monday and reiterated on Tuesday that it planned to delay the release of three more hostages after accusing Israel of failing to meet the terms of the ceasefire, including by not allowing an agreed-upon number of tents and other aid into Gaza.

Amid the mounting tensions, US President Donald Trump emboldened Israel to call for the release of even more remaining hostages on Saturday.

After meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II at the White House on Tuesday, Trump predicted Hamas would not release all remaining hostages as he had demanded.

"I don't think they're going to make the deadline, personally," the president said of Hamas. "They want to play tough guy. We'll see how tough they are." Since the ceasefire took effect, Hamas has released 21 hostages for more than 730 Palestinian prisoners. A second phase calls for the return of remaining hostages and an indefinite extension of the truce. However, Trump's statements about the pending releases and plans for post-war Gaza have shaken its fragile architecture.

It wasn't immediately clear whether Netanyahu's threat referred to the three hostages scheduled for release on Saturday or all the remaining hostages, which would be a departure from the terms of the ceasefire. *—PTI*

B'desh protesters attack stall of Taslima's books

DHAKA, 12 FEB

A group of protesters stormed a book stall in Dhaka for displaying the works of exiled Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin, prompting Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus to order a probe into the "disorderly behaviour", a media report said.

The incident took place on Monday, the 10th day of the Amar Ekushey Book Fair in Suhrawardy Udyan, when a group under the banner of Towhidi Janata stormed the stall of publishing house Sabyasachi Prokashoni, the report said.

The group surrounded the publisher and chanted slogans, prompting police to intervene and take Sabyasachi publisher Shatabdi Vobo into their control room to restore order, it said.

However, the protesters then encircled the police control room, keeping tensions high.

Following widespread criticism, Chief Adviser Yunus ordered authorities on Monday evening to bring those responsible to justice, it added. "This kind of disorderly behaviour disregards both the rights of citizens and the laws of Bangladesh," the Chief Adviser's Office said in a statement.

Since the incident, the Sabyasachi stall, number 128, has remained closed. *—PTI*

Russia has launched several drone attacks against Ukrainian energy infrastructure recently **PHOTO: PTI**

Zelenskyy proposes to trade land with Putin

KYIV, 12 FEB

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy plans to offer Russia a straight-up land exchange to end its three-year war if United States President Donald Trump manages to bring both countries to the negotiating table.

"We will swap one territory for another," Zelenskyy said in an interview with the Guardian published Tuesday, saying Kyiv would yield part of the Kursk region it has held since its surprise August incursion into Russia.

As for which Russian-occupied areas Ukraine would demand in return, the Ukraine leader refused to be drawn: "I don't know, we will see. But all our territories are important, there is no priority."

Trump has repeatedly said he plans to end Russia's war against Ukraine, and claims to have made progress toward that end already in conversations with President Vladimir Putin. Putin, Trump says, "wants people to stop dying in the war" — Trump's team concedes, however, that both sides will have to give something up to end the conflict.

Russia has launched several massive drone attacks against Ukrainian energy infrastructure recently, continues to advance in the Donetsk region in the east of the country, and does not seem to be open to deals. Russia occupied an additional 3,600 square kilometers of Ukraine's territory last year and now control about 20 percent of the country in the east of the country, and does not seem to be open to deals. *—Politico*

NASA crew stuck in space to return to Earth soon

CAPE CANAVERAL, 12 FEB

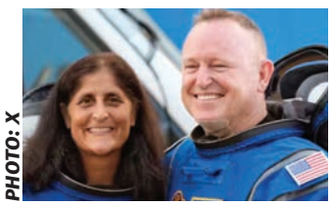


PHOTO: X

NASA's two stuck astronauts may land on Earth a little sooner than planned. The space agency on Tuesday announced that SpaceX will switch capsules for upcoming astronaut flights in order to bring Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams home in mid-March instead of late March or April.

That will shave at least a couple weeks off their prolonged stay at the International Space Station, which hit the eight-month mark last week. "Human spaceflight is full of unexpected challenges," NASA's commercial crew programme manager Steve Stich said.

The test pilots should have returned in June on Boeing's Starliner capsule after a week-long flight demo. But the capsule had so much trouble getting to the space station that NASA decided to bring it back empty and reassigned the pair to SpaceX. Then SpaceX delayed the launch of their replacements on a brand new capsule that needed more prepping, which added more time to Wilmore and Williams' mission. With more work anticipated, NASA opted for next crew to fly on older capsule, with liftoff now targeted for 12 March. This older capsule had already been assigned to a private crew awaiting launch this spring. *—PTI*

'INJURIES WERE SERIOUS'

Rushdie relives stabbing attack in court

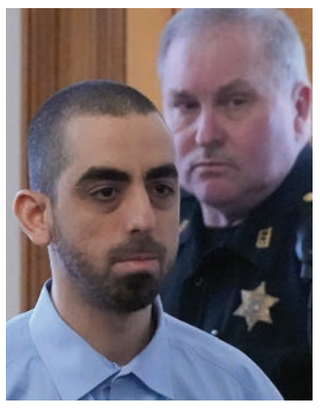
NEW YORK, 12 FEB

Novelist Salman Rushdie described the moment a knife-wielding attacker stormed on stage and attempted to kill him in a frenzied attack that left him blind in one eye.

He told jurors at the trial of his alleged attacker, 23-year-old American-Lebanese Hadi Matar, that Matar "was stabbing and slashing" at him.

"I was aware of this person rushing at me on my right-hand side," he said, recounting how he was about to speak at an arts event in New York State in August 2022.

Matar's legal team have sought to prevent witnesses from characterising Rushdie as a victim of persecution following Iran's 1989 issuing of a fatwa that called for his murder over supposed blasphemy in The Satanic Verses.



Hadi Matar; Salman Rushdie **PHOTO: X**

Matar is accused of stabbing Rushdie about 10 times with a 15cm blade.

As he did on the trial's opening day, Matar said, "Palestine will be free", as he was led into court Tuesday.

"The injuries were very serious and it took a long time to recover… the gash (in my neck) was so deep, it had to be held together with metal staples," Rushdie said.

Matar previously told media he had only read two pages of The Satanic Verses but believed the author had "attacked Islam". He lived in seclusion in London for a decade after the 1989 fatwa, but for the past 20 years – until the attack – he lived relatively normally in New York.

He became the centre of a fierce tug-of-war between free speech advocates and those who insisted that insulting religion, particularly Islam, was unacceptable in any circumstances.

Last year, he published a memoir, called Knife, in which he recounted the near-death experience. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: X

Gold declines Rs 340, silver climbs Rs 600

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Gold prices declined Rs 340 to Rs 87,960 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid weak global trends, according to All India Sarafa Association. On Tuesday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had ended at Rs 88,300 per 10 grams. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also depreciated Rs 340 to Rs 87,560 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 87,900 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. However, silver prices increased Rs 600 to Rs 97,200 per kg on Wednesday. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for April delivery declined Rs 659, or 0.77 per cent, to Rs 84,864 per 10 grams. The US Consumer Price Index data, to be announced later in the day, will be crucial in assessing the interest rate trend, which could influence gold's movement, he said. *—PTI*

Rupee falls 8 paise to 86.87 against US dollar

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The rupee failed to sustained its recovery and depreciated 8 paise to close at 86.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday due to a firm American currency and unending outflow of foreign funds. According to forex traders, rupee stayed firm initially but lost grounds amid volatile domestic equity markets that also added to the trend of withdrawal by foreign institutional investors. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.44 and moved between the high of 86.36 and the low of 86.91 against the greenback during intra-day. The unit ended the session at 86.87 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 8 paise from its previous close. *—PTI*

Renuka Sugars Q3 net loss widens to ₹203.7 crore

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Shree Renuka Sugars has posted widening of its net loss to Rs 203.7 crore in the December quarter, on lower income. The company reported a net loss of Rs 171.7 crore during the corresponding quarter a year earlier, according to a regulatory filing issued on Tuesday. Its total consolidated income declined to Rs 2,478.3 crore in the third quarter of the 2025-26 fiscal from Rs 3,009.7 crore in the year-ago period. Expenses remained lower at Rs 2,869.3 crore as against Rs 3,135.7 crore in the said period. The government recently permitted export of 10 lakh tonnes of domestic sugar, which improved the domestic sugar prices, and its effect may be felt in following quarters. *—PTI*

US's Enfabrica commences India ops in Hyderabad

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

US-based fabless semiconductor company Enfabrica Corporation on Wednesday announced the start of its India operations with a new office and R&D facility in Hyderabad. Enfabrica India aims to hire top-tier talent with a target to quadruple the number of employees by the end of 2025, a company statement said. The company currently has a global team of 135 engineers. India's advanced digital public infrastructure that spans a diverse demographic and economic landscape is a critical enabler for scaling modern AI applications, it said. Enfabrica has raised USD 260 million to date from investors including Sutter Hill Ventures, Atreides Management, Spark Capital, Valor Equity Partners, Arm, Nvidia, Samsung Catalyst and Cisco Investments. *—PTI*

Markets fall for 6th day dragged by FII outflows

Sensex closes at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points

MUMBAI, 12 FEB

Stock markets closed lower for the sixth straight day on Wednesday with Sensex falling by 122 points on unabated foreign fund outflows and trade war worries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex, which had tanked more than 900 points intra-day, closed at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent following a recovery in financial stocks in the last hour.

During the day, the benchmark tanked 905.21 points or 1.18 per cent to sink below the 76,000-level to hit a low of 75,388.39.

The NSE Nifty dipped 26.55 points or 0.12 per cent to 23,045.25, marking its sixth straight day of losses. Intraday, it tumbled 273.45 points or 1.18 per cent to 22,798.35, falling below the crucial 23,000-mark.

Since February 4, the BSE bellwether gauge has slumped 2,412.73 points or 3.07 per cent, while the Nifty tanked 694 points or 2.92 per cent.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, ITC, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, Titan and Infosys were the biggest laggards.

Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,486.41 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Additionally, uncertainty regarding the impact of metal tariffs added to market caution, Nair said.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in territory.

European markets were trading higher. US markets ended mostly higher. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.78 per cent to USD 76.40 a barrel. *—PTI*

Nifty dips 26.55 points or 0.12 per cent to 23,045.25, marking its sixth straight day of losses *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

MFs SEE RS 39,688 CR INFLOW IN JAN

Equity mutual funds attracted Rs 39,688 crore in January, driven by sharp inflow in small and midcap schemes, even as market volatilities continued. However, this was 3.5 per cent lower than the net inflow of Rs 41,156 crore registered in December. The latest fund infusion by investors also marks the 47th consecutive month of net inflows into the segment. Apart from equities, debt funds registered an inflow of Rs 1.28 lakh crore.

SOYBEAN OIL SURGES

Palm oil imports hit 13-year low

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

India's palm oil imports plunged 65 per cent year-on-year to 2,75,241 tonne in January 2025, the lowest in 13 years, as buyers shifted to cheaper soybean oil, industry body Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) said on Wednesday.

Total vegetable oil imports dropped 13 per cent to 10.49 lakh tonne in January from 12 lakh tonne a year earlier.

"Palm oil is losing market share in India and slowing down and the share is taken by soya oil," the SEA said in a statement.

Malaysian palm oil shipments declined as tightening export supplies prompted consumers to switch to lower-priced South American soybean oil.

Soybean oil imports more than doubled to 4,44,026 tonne in January from 1,88,859 tonne a year ago, while sunflower oil shipments rose 31 per cent to 2,88,284 tonne.

Among palm oil products, refined bleached deodorized (RBD) palmolein imports fell to 30,465 tonne from 2,44,678 tonne a year ago. Crude palm oil shipments declined to 2,40,276 tonne from 5,32,877 tonne.

Although palm oil prices dropped by USD 80-100 per tonne in the past month, soybean oil remains more attractive, the SEA said.

India, the world's largest edible oil consumer and importer, had edible oil stocks of 21.76 lakh tonne as of 1 February.

Indonesia and Malaysia are the major palm oil suppliers to India, while Argentina, Brazil and Russia supply soybean oil. Russia and Ukraine are the main suppliers of sunflower oil. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Nokia bags Airtel deal for 5G service

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel has awarded a contract to Nokia and Qualcomm for the expansion of 5G Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) and Wi-Fi solutions, a move aimed at powering high-speed internet access for users across India.

Nokia's 5G Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) and Wi-Fi 6 access point devices will be produced in India, according to a release.

The release, however, did not divulge the financial details of the contract.

The initiative will enable Airtel to provide superior broadband services in areas where fiber connectivity is either scarce or challenging to implement.

Under this contract, Nokia will supply Airtel with its 5G FWA outdoor gateway receiver and Wi-Fi 6 Access Point, utilising Qualcomm Modem-RF and Wi-Fi 6 chipsets.

"The deployment of fixed wireless broadband access via 5G networks stands out as a significant application of 5G technology, especially in India, which faces low fiber penetration and a high demand for digital services," the release said.

Airtel will leverage Nokia's FastMile 5G outdoor receivers, geared for multi-dwelling units and capable of serving two households concurrently, thus driving a reduction in connection expenses.

"These receivers feature high-gain antennas that enhance broadband access over extended distances while efficiently managing radio resources," the release said.

Moreover, the FastMile 5G outdoor receiver utilises Power-over-Ethernet (PoE) technology, enabling simple installation on various surfaces such as walls, balconies, or poles.

Airtel will implement Nokia's Wi-Fi 6 access point within residences to enhance the in-home experience, he release said. *—PTI*

Hyundai Motor in MSCI list as Adani Green moves out

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) will be added to the MSCI India Index while Adani Green Energy will move out, effective 28 February, 2025, as per the latest index review by MSCI.

The MSCI said the changes in its Global Standard Indexes will take place on 28 February, 2025.

Shares of the HMIL climbed 3.41 per cent to Rs 1,898.20 on the BSE during the morning trade while Adani Green Energy declined 4.95 per cent to Rs 896.90.

The stock of HMIL, however, later gave up early gains and was trading lower in line with the weak trend in the equity market.

The MSCI is a leading provider of critical decision support tools and services for the global investment community. In its Global Small Cap Indexes, 19 firms will be added while 19 companies will move out effective February 28.

The additions are Ola Electric Mobility, Afcons Infrastructure, Akums Drugs and Pharmaceuticals, Allied Blenders, ASK Automotive, Black Box, Cartrade Tech, E2E Networks, Greaves Cotton, Jyoti CNC Automation, Kovai Medical Center and Hospital, Manorama Industries, Pearl Global Industries, Shaily Engineering, Sundaram Clayton, TBO Tek, V2 Retail, Websol Energy and Zaggle Prepaid.

However, Advanced Enzyme Tech, Bajaj Hindusthan Sugar, Balmer Lawrie, D B Corp, DCB Bank, Fineotex Chemical, Jai Corp, Jamna Auto, La Opala, Magellanic Cloud, Mahindra Logistics, Sanghvi Movers, Shivalik Bimetal, Spandana Sphoorty Financial, Sula Vineyards, Sun Pharma Advanced Research, VST Industries and West Coast Paper Mills will move out. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

SIG plans to invest another €40M in India

AHMEDABAD, 12 FEB

Global packaging solutions provider SIG will invest 40 million euros (around Rs 360 crore) in the second phase to increase capacity of its plant in India, a "key growth market" for the Swiss multinational, a top company official said.

With the new tranche of fund infusion, the total investment of SIG at the Ahmedabad-based plant will increase to 130 million euros (around Rs 1,168 crore), including the 90 million euros of investments during the first phase.

"Phase II has been activated now, the board has already approved 40 million euros. This confirms that we are in line with our mid-long term plan," said Abdelghany Eladib, the SIG president and general manager for (India, Middle East and Africa).

Work on the second phase would be completed in the next three years by 2027, he added. Phase I of SIG, has been completed in just 20 months. *—PTI*

DGTR ends anti-dumping probe on Chinese fasteners

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The commerce ministry investigation arm DGTR has terminated an anti-dumping investigation into the import of Chinese fasteners, used in multiple sectors, including construction and auto, according to a notification.

Fasteners include screws, bolts, nuts, concrete nails, industrial staple pins, steel strapping seals, plastic strip nails, and cable clip nails.

In its final findings, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) said there is no sufficient evidence of dumping and injury to justify the continuation of the investigation.

The directorate had "suo-motu" initiated the probe in September 2023 against the alleged dumping of the product.

Usually, anti-dumping investigations are initiated based on an application filed by domestic producers, but since the fragmented industries did not have the knowhow of the procedures involved in the trade remedy probe, the directorate undertakes the exercise to investigate the matter on its own initiative.

The move is aimed at granting protection to the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) producers against dumped goods from China.

In international trade parlance, dumping happens when a country or a firm exports an item at a price lower than the price of that product in the targeted market. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

PHOTO: ANI

IEA asks India to free up gas pricing

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

International Energy Agency (IEA) on Wednesday asked India to free up its pricing of natural gas and unbundling of marketing and transportation business to help increase usage of the fuel in the economy.

The IEA, in its India Gas Market Report: Outlook to 2030, projected the country's gas consumption rising by 60 per cent to 103B cubic metres (bcm) annually by the end of the decade.

As India targets raising the share of relatively cleaner natural gas in its energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030 from just above six per cent currently, IEA prescribed a set of policy reforms to usher in its greater use.

- The report said extending gas pricing freedom to all fields could stimulate greater investment in upstream sector and availability

Pricing of gas, which is used to generate electricity, make fertilisers and turned into CNG to power automobiles and piped to household kitchens for cooking, is skewed. Gas from legacy fields of state-owned firms like ONGC and Oil India Ltd is currently capped at USD 6.5 per million British thermal unit while there are limits also imposed on fuel from difficult and high costing fields like deepsea.

"The anticipated easing of global gas market conditions in the latter half of the decade provides an opportunity for the government to implement full gas pricing freedom.

The report said extending gas pricing freedom to all fields could stimulate greater investment in upstream sector and availability. *—PTI*

DESI DRINK

Maaza becomes Coca-Cola's third billion-dollar brand in India

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Maaza, a desi mango fruit-based drink owned by Coca-Cola, touched the milestone of becoming a billion-dollar brand in 2024, its Chairman and CEO James Quincey has said.

It has now become the "30th billion-dollar brand" from the stable of the global beverage major, Quincey said during the company's post-earning calls on Tuesday.

In the Indian market, Coca-Cola's business "rebounded nicely during the quarter, and we grew volume", he said.

Before Maaza, ThumsUp had in 2021 achieved the feat of becoming the first billion-dollar desi brand for Coca-Cola.

The Coca-Cola Company in 1993 acquired both Maaza and Thums Up from Ramesh Chauhan of Parle Bisleri when the Atlanta-headquartered company re-entered the Indian market.

Coca-Cola had then bought the entire portfolio of aerated drinks from the Chauhan brothers, which also included Gold Spot and Limca. Maaza was launched in 1976 in India and is sold locally.

A year after that in 2022,

- It has now become the '30th billion-dollar brand' from the stable of the global beverage major, Quincey said during the company's post-earning calls on Tuesday

Coca-Cola's lemon and lime-flavoured soft drink Sprite became a billion-dollar brand in the Indian market. This was a brand introduced by Coca-Cola to the Indian markets.

The cola major in the Indian market "recruited consumers with innovative marketing campaigns that linked Coca-Cola with music, Sprite with travel and Thums Up with movies," said Quincey.

India is the fifth largest market for the Coca-Cola Company globally.

Moreover, "in 2024 our system added approximately 440,000 outlets by digital customer platforms in India, which provides more opportunities to better tailor our product, price, and packaging offerings," he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Star table tennis player Manika Batra loses her father

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Commonwealth Games gold medallist table tennis player Manika Batra's father Girish died due to cardiac arrest. Girish died on Tuesday and his cremation was performed on the same day at Inderpuri. The prayer ceremony for the departed soul will be held on Thursday. The 29-year-old Manika is India's top women's singles player. She won a gold medal each in the women's singles and women's team event in the 2018 Commonwealth Games. She also won a women's doubles silver and mixed doubles bronze in the same CWG. In the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games, she won a mixed doubles bronze medal. *—PTI*

India's Shubman Gill celebrates his century during the third ODI. **PHOTO: PTI**

India demolish England, sweep 3-0

Robust batting show by Gill's 100 heralded India's 142-run in the final ODI

AHMEDABAD, 12 FEB

A robust batting show led by the Shubman Gill's attractive century heralded India's 142-run hammering of England in the third and final ODI as the hosts completed a dominant 3-0 clean sweep to culminate preparations for the Champions Trophy, here on Wednesday.

India ticked all the remaining boxes with vice-captain Gill (112) following up his twin fifties earlier in the series with a seventh ODI ton of his career while middle-order mainstays Virat Kohli (52) and Shreyas Iyer (78) pushed India to a formidable 356 in the first half.

Indian bowlers then took over the mantle to complete the England demolition job, bundling out the visitors for a mere 214 in 34.2 overs to complete a comprehensive victory — their second largest in ODIs in terms of runs against a familiar opponent. There was no change in the script for English, who came crashing down against spin after a sparkling start against pace, which was provided by the pair of Ben Duckett (34) and Phil Salt (24) in tow.

The slowness of the surface aided Indian bowlers as strike-making became difficult as the match progressed.

Duckett took charge of England's response early on but played one shot too many. After smacking Arshdeep Singh (2/33) for four consecutive boundaries around the park in the fifth over, he again went after the left-arm seamer but was deceived by the 'pace off' knuckle ball.

The mishit was collected cleanly by India skipper Rohit Sharma at mid-off and Arshdeep soon bounced out Salt, albeit off a slower one which the batter hit meekly to Axar Patel for a grab.

Tom Banton gave a good example of himself playing his first ODI against India, hitting a couple of attractive reverse sweeps against spinners but he could not push on beyond a 41-ball 38 with four fours and two sixes.

Earlier, Gill led the way with a fluent 112 while Kohli and Iyer also cashed in on ideal conditions in their last outing before the Champions Trophy.

The India vice-captain Gill also achieved the unique feat of scoring a century each across the three international formats at the same venue. *—PTI*

Harshit Rana celebrates with Axar Patel after taking the wicket of England's Harry Brook **PHOTO: PTI**

MP to face Haryana in NG women's hockey final match

HARIDWAR, 12 FEB

Defending champions Madhya Pradesh will face Haryana in the women's hockey final at the 38th National Games in a repeat of last edition summit clash after they won their respective semifinals here on Wednesday. In the first semifinal, MP beat Maharashtra 4-1 in shootout after the two sides were locked 1-1 at the end of regular time. Aishwarya Dubey put Maharashtra in the lead in the sixth minute but Nilanjali Rai equalised for MP in the 43rd minute. Both goals came off penalty corners at the Vandana Katariya Hockey Stadium here. In the second semifinal, Haryana defeated Jharkhand 2-1. Kanika Siwach opened the scoring for Haryana in the eighth minute and captain Rani converted a penalty corner to give a 2-0 lead. *—PTI*

Bowling action: Kuhnemann to undergo tests

SYDNEY, FEB 12

Australian cricketer Matt Kuhnemann will undergo biomechanical testing on his bowling action after the left-arm spinner was reported by umpires during the recent test series win in Sri Lanka. Kuhnemann is expected to undergo biometric testing in Brisbane later this month and the results will be forwarded to the ICC for analysis. If he fails the testing, Kuhnemann will be suspended while undergoing remedial work on his bowling technique. "The Australian team was notified following the second test against Sri Lanka in Galle and will support Matt through the process," Cricket Australia said. The 28-year-old Kuhnemann took 16 wickets in the two-match series at an average of 17.18. He has taken 25 wickets in his five test match appearances. *—PTI*

ESFI hails inclusion of e-sports in cash prize programmes

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Hailing the sports ministry's decision to include e-sports medallists and their coaches under its cash incentive program, the ESFI said it would lead "exponential rise in grassroots participation." The ministry has come out with a list of 51 sports that will be eligible for cash rewards, including all those which are part of the Olympic Games, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and the World University Games roster. The list includes sports like mallakhamb, e-sports and kho kho. "This is a landmark moment for Indian e-sports. The government's recognition of Esports medalists and their coaches with financial incentives is a defining step for our sports," Director of E-sports Federation of India and VP-Asian Esports Federation Lokesh Suji said. "India is already a force to reckon with in e-sports." *—PTI*

BADMINTON ASIA CHAMPIONSHIP

India crush Macau 5–0, storm into quarterfinals

QINGDAO, 12 FEB

India made a sizzling start to their campaign, delivering a 5-0 thrashing to Macau in their opening group D tie of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship here on Wednesday.

Having won the bronze medal in the last edition in Dubai, India are now assured of a quarterfinal berth. They will next face Korea in their second and final group tie on Thursday.

The mixed doubles pair of Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath, the newly-crowned National Games gold medallists, gave India a rousing start, recording a 21-10, 21-9 win against Iok Chong Leong and Weng Chi Ng in the opening match.

In men's singles, 2021 World Championships bronze medallist Lakshya Sen then outwitted Pang Fong Pui 21-16, 21-12, making it 2-0.

Malvika Bansod, the 2024 Hylo Open finalist, then sealed the tie for India with a dominant 21-15, 21-9 win over H a o Wai Chan in women's singles.

- The mixed doubles pair of Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath, the newly-crowned National Games gold medallists, gave India a rousing start

Chirag Shetty paired up with MR Arjun and prevailed 21-15, 21-19 over Chin Pon Pui and Kok Wen Vong in men's doubles.

The world number 9 women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand completed the demolition with a 21-10, 21-5 thrashing of NG Weng Chi and Pui Chi Wa in the final match.

Thursday's match against Korea will decide the group topper. *—PTI*

Pranavi, Aditi, Diksha & Tvesa aim to shine in Saudi Ladies Int'l

RIYADH, 12 FEB

Young golfer Pranavi Urs, the top Indian on the Ladies European Tour in 2024, will aim to make an impression when she makes her debut at the sixth PIF Saudi Ladies International, starting here on Wednesday.

The other Indians in the field for the lucrative USD 5 million event include five-time LET winner Aditi Ashok, who also competes on the LPGA Tour, two-time LET winner Diksha Dagar, and Tvesa Malik Sandhu.

Pranavi, who impressed on the domestic Hero Women's Golf Tour with several wins, secured five Top 10 finishes, including two third-place finishes at the Dormy Open and Andalucia Open de Espana.

Diksha Dagar, who had a strong start to the 2025 season, finished second last week after losing in a play-off to Cara Gainer at the season-opening Lalla Meryem Cup.

Tvesa Malik Sandhu, meanwhile, bounced back to regain her LET card and finished 60th on the Money List in 2024. She came close to her first win before losing a play-off to Alice Hewson at the VP Swiss Bank Ladies Open.

This week, a massive prize pool of USD 5 million is on offer, split across two events.

Pranavi Urs **PHOTO: X**

- A total of 112 players will compete in two competitions, with a 54-hole Individual stroke play tournament alongside a 36-hole Team competition. The field comprises eight tournament invitations, 62 LET players, and 42 players from the top 300 in the Rolex Women's World Golf Rankings

The Team competition has a prize fund of USD 500,000, while the Individual competition boasts a total prize pool of USD 4.5 million.

A total of 112 players will compete in two competitions, with a 54-hole Individual stroke play tournament alongside a 36-hole Team competition. The field comprises eight tournament invitations, 62 LET players, and 42 players from the top 300 in the Rolex Women's World Golf Rankings. *—PTI*

Kerala sneak into Ranji semis with 1-run lead

PUNE, 12 FEB

Kerala produced a doughty batting effort to hang on to a draw against Jammu and Kashmir, and progressed to the Ranji Trophy semifinals on the back of a slender 1-run first innings lead here on Wednesday.

Player of the match Salman Nizar (44 not out, 162 balls, 8x4) and Mohammed Azharuddeen (67 not out, 118b, 9x4 2x6) saw off nearly 43 overs during their unbroken 115-run alliance for the seventh wicket as Kerala made 295 for six in their second innings.

Their partnership was enough for Kerala, overnight 100 for two, to see off the final day's proceedings, and set up a semi-final meeting with former champions Gujarat from 17 February.

This will be Kerala's second appearance in the Ranji Trophy last four round after the 2018-19 season. They had lost to eventual champions Vidarbha by an innings and 11 runs at Wayanad last time.

The left-handed batter had also made a vital unbeaten 112 in Kerala's first innings and stitched an 81-run alliance with Basil Thampi to give Kerala a crucial 1-run lead. *—PTI*

17 February will see Kerala's second appearance in the Ranji Trophy semis after the 2018-19 season **PHOTO: X / Kerala Cricket Association**

Bellingham's late strike seals Real's 3–2 win on Man City

MANCHESTER, 12 FEB

Real Madrid's Galacticos just don't know when they are beaten. Manchester City just keep on making the same mistakes.

Jude Bellingham's stoppage-time goal sealed a stunning comeback for Madrid and a 3-2 lead in its Champions League playoff against City.

In six frantic minutes at the end of a breathless first leg Tuesday, the Spanish giant scored twice to take a precious advantage into next week's match at the Bernabeu.

City led 2-1 after 80 minutes at the Etihad Stadium through goals in each half from Erling Haaland. But Brahim Diaz and then Bellingham silenced the home crowd and extend a sorry record for City that has seen it concede seven goals in the last 15 minutes of Champions League games this season.

Bellingham slid in to convert Vinicius Junior's lobbed pass in the second minute of added time to bring back memories of Madrid's dramatic comeback against City in the semi-final in 2022. Then it was Rodrygo who scored twice from the 90th and Madrid eventually sent Pep Guardiola's team crashing out in extra time.

Defeat ended City's 35-game unbeaten run at home in the Champions League, dating back to 2018.

Ousmane Dembélé struck twice for PSG to extend his scoring streak to 10 games in a row. *—PTI*

Bellingham converted Vinicius Junior's pass in the added time **PHOTO: X**

Nottingham beats Exeter in FA Cup

EXERTER, 12 FEB

High-flying Nottingham Forest, third in the Premier League standings, won 4-2 in a shootout at St James Park after the game ended 2-2.

Josh Magennis gave Exeter the lead in the fifth, but Ramon Sosa and Taiwo Awoniyi put Forest ahead at halftime. Magennis leveled the game five minutes after the break. Exeter went down to 10 men when Ed Turns was sent off in the 87th.

Forest, however could not find a winner in extra time, meaning the game went to spot kicks, with Neco Williams scoring the winning penalty.

Forest plays Ipswich in the fifth round. *—PTI*

WILL IT PAY?

India takes bold gamble in CT squad selection

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

It aligns with head coach Gautam Gambhir's high-risk-high-reward approach but can India's Champions Trophy squad, having lost its game-changing pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah to injury, deliver the goods at the ODI showpiece?

The answer to that question is not particularly straightforward given the audacious calls taken to decide the final 15. The selection risks start with the drafting in of five spinners. The Dubai-bound flight will feature Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy in a spin-heavy bowling attack.

Harshit Rana has replaced Bumrah with the more experienced Mohammed Siraj relegated to the group of non-travelling reserves alongside young batter Yashasvi Jaiswal and all-rounder Shivam Dube.

Chakravarthy has been trusted to deliver in a multi-nation tournament, after his failure to do so in the T20 World Cup 2021 at the same venue.

Another selection paradox is placing Rana ahead of Siraj as Bumrah's replacement for a tournament in which teams will have to do the tight-rope walk of three matches in the league phase.

Harshit Rana

Conventional thinking says that experience more than explosiveness matters in such events, but the wise men went ahead with Rana.

Skipper Rohit Sharma says ineffectiveness with the old ball led to Siraj's omission from the marquee event.

A common line of thinking can be that the selectors wanted a bowler with some mystery element about him in the squad once Bumrah was ruled out with a lower back injury.

So, they picked an in-form Chakravarthy. Fair call. But why select him in place of Jaiswal, an opener?

It was tough to accommodate Jaiswal and Shreyas Iyer in the same eleven but an injury to Virat Kohli gave them a temporary relief. *—PTI*

TEAM:

Rohit Sharma (Captain), Shubman Gill (Vice-captain), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (WK), Rishabh Pant (WK), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakaravarthy.

Dembélé's finishing flourish ends PSG doubts

PARIS, 12 FEB

Paris Saint-Germain forward Ousmane Dembélé is making scoring look so easy when for so long it proved elusive.

Dembélé is piling up the goals in a career-best season that has seen him silence critics who pointed to his wasteful finishing over the years.

He made it 23 so far this campaign with two goals in PSG's 3-0 victory at Brest in the first leg of their Champions League playoff on Tuesday. That's already nine more goals than his previous best tally of 14 with Barcelona in 2018-19.

"The team is in a good dynamic. Everyone is focused and playing really well and that helps me to score goals if I am in the right positions," Dembélé said. "The players, whether it's Bradley Barcola, Désiré Doué or Kvara (Khvicha Kvaratskhelia), give me great service."

Although Dembélé played down his own importance, he has scored in 10 straight games for PSG and is clearly now the team's leading player since Kylian Mbappé's offseason departure to Real Madrid.

Dembélé's first goal came in the 45th minute. Running onto a pass from Achraf Hakimi, Dembélé sprinted down the right wing and, with the defense backing off, curled a shot inside the near post.

PSG coach Luis Enrique said he is imposing no limits on how good Dembélé can become as a scorer. *—PTI*